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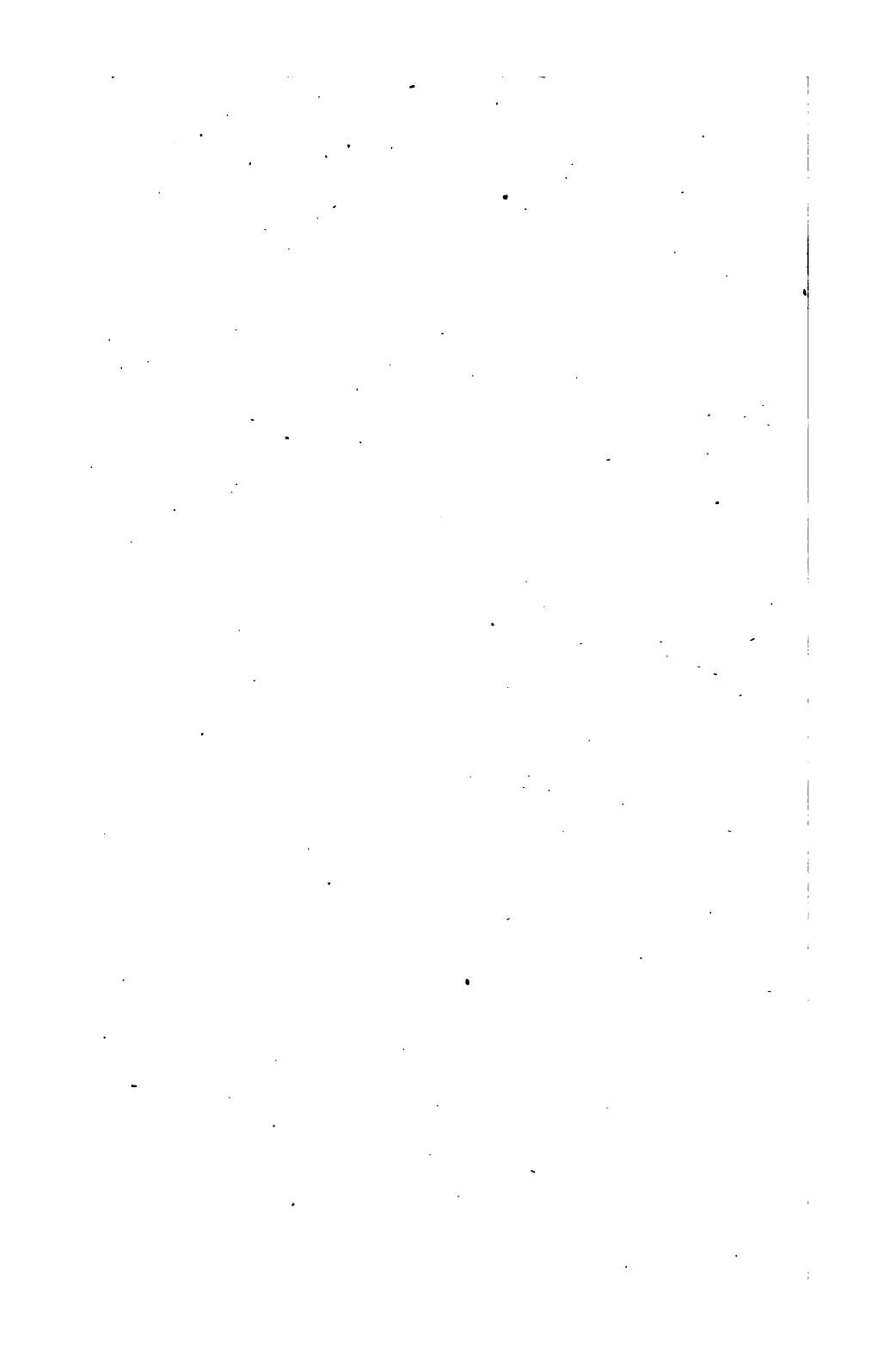
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# MARY OF BURGUNDY;

OR,

## THE REVOLT OF GHENT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"DARNLEY," "RICHELIEU," "HENRY MASTERTON,"

&c.

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"Thou wouldst be great,  
Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly  
That thou wouldst holily; wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win." *Macbeth.*

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# MARY OF BURGUNDY;

OR,

## THE REVOLT OF GHENT.

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### CHAPTER I.

EVERY one knows that, in the early dawn of a Sicilian morning, the shepherds and the watchers on the coast of the Messinese Strait will sometimes behold, in the midst of the clear unclouded blue of the sky, a splendid but delusive pageant, which is seen also, though in a less vivid form, amongst the Hebrides. Towers and castles, domes and palaces, festivals and processions, arrayed armies and contending hosts, pass, for a few minutes, in brilliant confusion before the eyes of the beholders, and then fade away, as if the scenes of another world



were, for some especial purpose, conjured up for a moment, and then withdrawn for ever from their sight.

Thus there are times, too, in the life of man, when the spirit, excited by some great and stirring passion, or by mingling with mighty and portentous events, seems to gain for a brief instant a confused but magnificent view of splendid things not yet in being. Imagination in the one case, and hope in the other, give form and distinctness to the airy images, though both are too soon doomed to fade away amidst the colder realities of the stern world we dwell in.

The mind of Albert Maurice had been excited by the scenes he had just gone through; and success, without making him arrogant, had filled him full of hope. Each step that he took forward seemed but to raise him higher, and each effort of an enemy to crush him, seemed, without any exertion of his own, but to clear the way before him. Such thoughts were mingling with other feelings — brought forth by the sight, and the voice, and the smile of Mary of



Burgundy, when the sudden call to her presence woke him from such dreams; but woke him only to show to his mind's eye a thousand confused but bright and splendid images, as gay, as glittering, as pageant-like, but as unreal also, as the airy vision which hangs in the morning light over the Sicilian seas. Fancy at once called up every thing within the wide range of possibility — battles and victories, and triumphant success, the shout of nations and of worlds, the sceptre, the palace, and the throne, with a thousand indistinct ideas of mighty things, danced before his eyes for a moment, with a sweeter and a brighter image, too, as the object and end of ambition, the reward of mighty endeavour, the crowning boon of infinite success. But still he felt and knew, even while he dreamed, that it was all unreal; and, as he followed the messenger with a quick pace, the vision faded, and left him but the cold and naked truth. At length, after passing through several chambers, which flanked the hall of audience, the door of a small apartment, called the bower, was thrown open, and the young



burgher stood once more before Mary of Burgundy.

One of the most painful curses of high station is that of seldom, if ever, being alone; of having no moment, except those intended for repose, in which to commune with one's own heart, without the oppression of some human eye watching the emotions of the mind as they act upon the body, and keeping sentinel over the heart's index—the face. Mary of Burgundy was not alone, though as much alone as those of her station usually are: she stood near a window, at the other side of the apartment, with her soft rounded arm and delicate hand twined in those of one of her fair attendants—Alice of Imbercourt—on whom she leaned slightly, while the Lord of Imbercourt himself stood beside her on the other hand; and, with his stately head somewhat bent, seemed, with all due reverence, to give her counsel upon some private matter of importance. Another figure was retiring from an opposite door as Albert Maurice entered; but who it was, the faint glance he caught did not permit the young burgher to distinguish.



He advanced towards the spot where the Princess stood, with the usual marks of ceremony and reverence; and, as he came near and bent one knee, she held out her hand for him to kiss, with a gentle smile, but with the air and demeanour of a princess.

“I congratulate you, Master Albert Maurice,” she said, as soon as he had risen, “on the clear and satisfactory manner in which you have been enabled to establish your innocence; for I fear that it sometimes happens that persons accused are not able to bring forward sufficient evidence to exculpate them before their princes, who, judging according to their best conscience, are often charged with cruelty or partiality, more from the defect of the testimony offered to them, than from any desire of doing aught but justice. I therefore congratulate you most sincerely on your having had the means of establishing your innocence beyond all doubt: and I am deeply gratified myself, that you have been able to remove every doubt from my own mind, as well as to satisfy my council.”

“Had every person accused, so gracious and



impartial a judge, Madam," replied the young citizen, "it were happy for the world; and, indeed, it was my full confidence in your own justice, and in that of the noble lords of the council, which made me appeal so boldly to your own decision."

"For so doing I thank you, Sir," replied the Princess; "and I have now sent for you to say so, as well as to speak with you on one part of your defence, which somewhat touched upon the honour of my father's justice. Although I marked it at the time, I did not choose to notice it before the many; and now, by the advice of one of my best and most faithful friends, I seek this private mode — certainly not of chiding you for what has passed your lips — but of calling to your remembrance things which might have made your words less bitter."

The Princess paused for a moment, colouring slightly, with some degree of agitation, from the task thus imposed upon her, and from the long time which it required her to speak upon subjects of some political importance. She showed, indeed, no awkward incompetence, no



want of mental power ; but her blush and her slight embarrassment were those of her youth, of her sex, and of a delicate and feeling mind. While she paused, Albert Maurice merely bowed his head, without reply ; and in a moment after, she proceeded.

“ I am very young, Sir,” she said, “ and, as a woman, am of course cut off from mingling greatly with mankind. Nevertheless, as it has so unfortunately fallen out, that the rule of these territories should seem to be at some time destined for a female hand, and that hand mine, I have not, of course, neglected the study of the laws and institutions, nor of the history, of the dominions that may one day become my own. In speaking of the city of Namur, you named rights violated, and privileges infringed, and, perhaps, alluded to some other privileges of which other towns have been deprived. Most of the events that you probably referred to, took place before the period to which my own remembrance extends ; but, if the historians of the land say true, no rights were ever, in any instance, arbitrarily wrenched away from the



people. In all cases, if my memory serve me right, the loss of privileges was inflicted on the citizens as a punishment for some crime, for some unprovoked revolt, for some attempt to snatch the power from what they considered a weak or embarrassed hand. Such being the case, justice — both in the abstract sense of awarding punishment for evil, or in the moral policy of deterring others from crime, by the example of retributive infliction — required that the cities which had so acted should suffer a certain penalty as the consequence. That penalty has always been the loss of some of their privileges; which punishment has uniformly been received by them as most merciful, at the time when detected treason or suppressed revolt brought upon them the wrath, and placed them at the mercy, of a powerful prince. Nor, let me say, can they hope to regain the privileges they have lost, except by a calm and tranquil obedience, or some service rendered, which may merit reward and confidence."

She paused, as if for reply; but Albert Maurice remained silent. In truth, he felt no



small difficulty in so shaping his answer as not to swerve from the truths indelibly written in his own heart, and yet not to hurt the feelings, or lower himself in the esteem, of one whose good opinion had become, he knew not why, of more consequence in his eyes than mortal opinion had ever been before. He felt, too, that the Princess spoke according to the ideas and sentiments of her rank and of her times; while he himself bore within his bosom the feelings of his own class, and the thoughts of times long gone, when liberty was eloquent and powerful.

Although between such different principles there was a gulf as deep as the abyss, still love might span it with a bridge, which, like that that leads to the Moslem paradise, is finer than a famished spider's thread. But it were wrong to say he loved. Oh, no! he would have shrunk from so idle a thought, had it come upon him in a tangible shape. Yet there was something growing upon his heart which softened it towards Mary of Burgundy — which rendered it unwilling to hurt her feelings —



which made it timid of offending her, though the eye of the proudest sovereign that ever trod the earth would not have caused it to quail for an instant.

The Lord of Imbercourt saw more clearly into the character of the man, and knew more of the circumstances of the times, than the Princess he had stayed to counsel; and perceiving that the young citizen was not about to reply, he spoke a few words in addition to that which Mary had advanced, taking a wider ground than she had assumed, and examining the subject more as a philosopher than either a feudal noble, or the counsellor of an absolute prince. He spoke of the necessity of order and good government, for the peace and happiness of the people themselves; he pointed out that tranquillity and general confidence were absolutely necessary to industry, both commercial and productive; and he showed, with the voice of years and experience, that turbulence and discontent were ruinous to any nation, but, in a tenfold degree ruinous to a commercial people. "Believe me, Master Albert Maurice," he added, "that



just in the same proportion that the man is to be blest, who teaches a people to improve their moral state, to cultivate their intellects, and to extend their knowledge and resources, — in the same degree is he to be hated and despised, who teaches them to be discontented with their condition.”

He paused ; and Albert Maurice replied with more calm firmness than he could, perhaps, have shown, had he answered the Princess, — “ I will not, my Lord, attempt to use towards you that ordinary fallacy which, in fact, arises only in the imperfection of language, namely, that people must be rendered discontented with their condition, in order to gain the desire of changing it. I know and feel, that, though we have not a word exactly to express it, there is an immense difference between discontent with our present state, and the calm desire of improving it. But still, it may be doubted, whether the mind of man, especially in multitudes, does not require some more universal and potent stimulus to carry it generally forward to great improve-



ments, than the slow progress of increasing knowledge can afford."

"No, no, indeed," replied Imbercourt; "the potent stimulus is like too much wine, that only maddens for the time, and then leaves every nerve more feeble and relaxed thereafter. No, no : administer good plain and wholesome food to the social as well as to the human body ; and, growing in strength and performing all its function correctly, it will gain, by the same calm and easy degrees, the desire and the power of obtaining that which is best adapted to its state."

Albert Maurice felt that there was truth in what the Lord of Imbercourt advanced ; but, nevertheless, between them there still existed a thousand differences of opinion, which would have required an infinite change of circumstances to have removed. The differences of their age, of their station, of their education, and of their habits, were all as much opposed to a coincidence of thought, as the difference of their natural characters itself ; and the only point of resemblance between the young citizen



and the high-born noble — namely, the fine aspirations and elegant feelings which raised the former above the generality of his class — naturally tended to make him detest those laws of society which held him down in a rank below that for which he was fitted, and look with disgust upon those who maintained them as a barrier against him. At the same time he was conscious that in his bosom there might be some feelings not entirely patriotic, or, at least, he felt afraid that it was so; and perceiving, also, that the arguments which were addressed to him, were far more liberal and plausible than those usually held by the class to which the Lord of Imbercourt belonged; he did not choose to enter into a farther discussion, which might either shake his own determinations, or expose the views on which he acted to those who would take means to foil his designs.

“I am, of course, incompetent, my Lord,” he replied, “to argue with an experienced statesman like yourself, on subjects which you must have had a much greater opportunity of examining than I can have had.”



Imbercourt watched his countenance during this brief reply; and he was too much versed in the ways of men to be deceived by its apparent modesty. He saw, and saw clearly, that the high and flashing spirit, the keen and acute mind, which the young burgher had displayed at the examination before the council—and which, indeed, had been reported long before to the ministers of the Duke of Burgundy—was curbed and restrained on the present occasion; and he easily divined some of the motives which created such reserve. He saw, too, that it would be necessary to make use of other inducements than those of argument for the purpose of detaching the young citizen from the factious party in Flanders, and of preventing him from giving to their designs, the consolidation, the direction, and the vigour which such a mind as his might bestow.

Neither had the slight shade of emotion which had passed over the countenance of Albert Maurice, when addressed by the Princess, escaped his experienced eye; and, though far too proud and aristocratic in his own nature ever to



dream that a burgher of Ghent could indulge in the very thought of love towards the heiress of the land, he was sufficiently chivalrous in his own mind to believe, that a smile from such fair lips, a word from so sweet a voice, might bend a man on whom arguments would prove all useless. He turned, therefore, to the Princess, with a smile, saying, — “ Well, let us not reason of the past; I think, Madam, that you had something to say to this young gentleman concerning the future; and, as it could come with full effect from no lips but yours, I pray you communicate it to him yourself.”

“ Most willingly will I do so,” replied Mary of Burgundy; “ and I am sure that I shall not speak in vain. I have heard, and, indeed, I know, Master Albert Maurice, that no man in the good city of Ghent possesses so much influence as yourself with the merchants and people of the good towns. My father being now absent, and likely, I fear, to remain so for some time, — as my dear and excellent stepdame, Margaret his Duchess, has been called to join him at Dijon, — and the government of Flanders rest-



ing in my weak hands, I am anxious, most anxious, to preserve the country, and especially this city of Ghent — which," she added with a smile, "has not in all times been famous for its orderly disposition — in peace and tranquillity during my temporary government, which, I pray, God shorten. My request to you, therefore, is, that you will use your best endeavours to still all irritation, to calm all disposition to tumult, and to maintain in the people a spirit of order and quiet. May I trust that you will do so?"

The blood rushed up to the temples of the young citizen with fearful force; and the pain that he experienced for a few moments, till he had determined upon his reply, would be difficult to describe. At length he answered, though with some hesitation.

"Madam," he said, "I feel assured that, under your sway, however long the government of Flanders may be delegated to you by your father, no infraction of the people's rights, no blow at the privileges of the good towns, will, or can take place. Under this conviction, I will



willingly promise what you demand, though, in truth, you attribute to me much greater influence than I possess. At the same time, Madam, let me pray you to remember, that if — which God forbid! — evil ministers or tyrannical officers should, as sometimes happens, wrong their master, by trampling on his subjects, I cannot, and I will not, bind myself to support such things, or to oppose my countrymen in seeking to right themselves.”

“God forbid, indeed,” exclaimed Mary, eagerly, “that you should ever be put to such a trial! Indeed, young gentleman, indeed,” she added, with her whole beautiful countenance glowing with enthusiasm, “to merit and to win my people’s love, to heal all feuds, to bind up every wound, to wipe the eyes that weep, to raise up the oppressed, to uphold and to promote the virtuous, and to guard the feeble and defenceless, would be the first wish and thought of Mary of Burgundy, were she queen of one half the world.”

“Madam, I believe it! — from my heart I believe it!” replied Albert Maurice, catching



the enthusiasm of her tone; "and may God bless and prosper you in the performance of so noble an intention!"

As he spoke, he felt that the presence of that fair being had become more dangerous to his resolutions and purposes, perhaps even to his peace, than he could have imagined possible; and, afraid that at every word he might promise more than circumstances might permit him to perform, or bind himself so strictly, that his duty to his country would be lost, — he paused, and drew a step back, in order to take his leave. The Princess saw the movement, and bowed her head, to signify that he was at liberty to depart. "Farewell, Sir," she said; "and do not forget the promise you have made."

The young citizen bowed, and retired; and, while Mary remained in deep and anxious conversation with Imbercourt, he made his way back to the antechamber of the audience-hall, which was now empty, and thence into the court of the palace, where he was joined by his uncle, Martin Fruse; and found the Lord of Neuf-châtel in the act of mounting his horse. The old



nobleman paused for a moment, to read the young citizen a long and stately lecture upon the impropriety of leaving, as he had done, those who had accompanied him to the council chamber, the moment that the examination was over. The mind of Albert Maurice, however, and his heart, were busied about far other things; and the reproof of the old cavalier fell upon a somewhat dull and inattentive ear. He answered with some formal words of apology, stating that he had been called away unexpectedly; and then, with more energy and feeling, expressed his gratitude for the kindness and services which the Lord of Neufchâtel had rendered him.

“Well, well, no more of that!” cried the old Lord; “never shall it be said that I shrunk from the side of an oppressed man, be he noble or not noble. Happy I am that you have so fully cleared yourself, Master Albert Maurice; and whenever the good citizens of Ghent require such aid and advice concerning matters of state and feudal law, as I, from my old acquaintance with courts and camps, can give, let



them come freely to consult me, without fear or bashfulness; that is to say, while I am in the city; for, in ten days' time, I go to join the camp, and once more, though the hand be feeble, and the head be grey, to lay lance in rest for Burgundy. However, absent or present, I shall always be happy to do what I can for the good city of Ghent."

Albert Maurice bowed, and his uncle bowed low; and, mounting his horse, though with somewhat less alacrity than he had done in his youthful days, the Lord of Neufchâtel quitted the palace court, and went bowing and nodding through the crowds assembled without. Albert Maurice and his uncle then followed, through the grim lanes of soldiery that still occupied the interior of the square. The appearance of the young citizen, after his exculpation, was instantly hailed by the multitudes without, as a sort of popular triumph; and, amidst shouts of joy and congratulation, he was conducted safely to his own dwelling.



## CHAPTER II.

WE must now carry the reader's mind forward to a day a little in advance of that which we last noticed.

It was towards that period of the year which the French call the *short summer of St. Martin*, from the fact of a few lingering bright days of sunshiny sweetness breaking in upon the autumn, as a memorial of the warmer season gone before. The sky was all full of light, and the air full of heat; and the grand masses of high grey clouds that occasionally floated over the sun were hailed gladly for their soft cool shadow, although the day was the eleventh of November. Sweeping over the prospect, like the mighty but indistinct images of great things and splendid purposes that sometimes cross a powerful but imaginative mind, the shadows of the clouds moved slow over hill and dale, field and forest. Now they cast large masses of the



woods into dark and gloomy shade, and left the rising grounds around to stand forth in light and sparkling brightness, giving no bad image of the dark memories that are in every heart, surrounded but not effaced by after joys. Now they floated soft upon the mountains, spreading an airy purple over each dell and cavity ; while, pouring into the midst of the valley, the bright orb of day lighted up tower, and town, and farm, and hamlet, and village spire, as hope lights up the existence of man, even while the many clouds of fate hang their heaviest shadows on the prospect round about him. The harmonious hue of autumn, too, was over all the world. Russet was the livery of the year ; and the brown fields, preparing for the sower, offered only a deeper hue of the same colour, which, though varied through a thousand shades, still painted every tree throughout the woods, and sobered down even the grassy meadows with a tint far different from that of spring. The sky, with the sunshine that it contained, was all summer ; but the aspect of every thing that it looked upon spoke of autumn sinking fast into the arms of winter.



Such was the scene upon the banks of the little river Geete, when a party, whose bright dresses and active movements spoke sport and gaiety, rode up the windings of the river, not far from the place where now stands the little hamlet of Sodoigne. No village, however, stood there then; and the banks of the stream were bordered for some miles with green meadows, not above two or three hundred yards in breadth. This rich pasture was bounded to the eastward by the forest of Hannut, which swept in irregular masses along the whole course of the river, and was confined on the other hand by the low but broken banks of the water-course, sometimes, in the steepest part, lined with bushes, which dipped their very branches in the current, but more often — where the turf and the stream were nearly upon a level — fringed with long green flags and other water-plants.

The party who cantered lightly along the meadows consisted of eight persons, of whom three were females; and each of the latter upon her hand bore the glove and falcon, which

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showed the object of their expedition. The first in state, in loveliness, and in grace, was Mary of Burgundy, mounted on a beautiful white horse adorned with many a goodly trapping, and which, though full of fire and life, she managed with that easy and graceful horsemanship for which she was famous, and which, unhappily, in after years, led to that fatal accident \* which deprived the world of one of its brightest ornaments. By her side rode the fair Alice of Imbercourt, her favourite friend and nearest attendant; while another young lady, of inferior rank, but still of noble birth, followed a step behind, somewhat embarrassed by the high spirit of her horse, which she managed well, but with less dexterity than the other two. An elderly gentleman, of mild, complacent, and courtly manners, followed the ladies as their principal attendant; while, of the other four, two habited in green, and furnished with long poles for beating the bushes, together with

\* She died a few years after this period, in consequence of a fall occasioned by her horse taking fright, while out falconing.



lures spare jesses, hoods, and bells, at once showed themselves as official falconers; and the two who brought up the rear, though armed with a degree of precaution that was very necessary in that day, appeared what they really were, namely, simple grooms.

There is something in the excitement of quick riding totally obnoxious to both fear and sadness. It is scarcely possible to conceive a person galloping easily along upon a spirited horse, without feeling his confidence and hope renewed, in some degree, whatever may be the circumstances of his situation. Thus, though in the heart of Mary of Burgundy there was many a memory of painful feelings, of disappointed hopes, and crushed affections; and, though across her mind, whenever she suffered it to rest upon the future, would come dark and painful apprehensions, — still the excitement of the sport, the beauty of the day, and the glow of exercise, had given to her heart a flow of high spirits that she had not known for many a day. Her mirth, indeed, was never



overpowering, and, if it reached the bounds of cheerfulness, it seldom went beyond.

Now, however, as they rode along by the banks of the stream, and as the falconers beat the bushes to rouse the objects of their chase, she jested in a tone of gentle gaiety with the fair girl who accompanied her upon all those matters which, to the heart of woman, are the important things of life.

Alice of Imbercourt, on her part, maintained the conversation with the same spirit, jested with like good-humoured malice with the Princess, and was never without an answer at her need, although she did not for a moment forget, that however high her own rank, Mary of Burgundy held a higher, nor ever failed to mingle with her speech so much of reverence as to show that she had not forgot the distinction.

“Nay, nay, own, dear Alice,” exclaimed the Princess, in reply to something that had passed before, “that day by day you have been bringing me nearer and nearer to a certain castle in the wood ; and, in truth, I think that you must



have got the good lord your father to be a confederate in your plot."

"Good sooth, dear lady," replied Alice, "a happy thing were it for us poor women if all fathers were so complacent: I know well where one little heart would be in that case;" and she looked up with an arch smile in the face of the Princess.

However strongly prudence may enjoin them to be silent themselves, all women feel more or less pleasure when the conversation is brought near the subject of their loves. Though Mary of Burgundy would not herself say one word that she could help, upon the feelings of her own heart, even to so dear and faithful a friend as Alice of Imbertcourt, yet she felt no displeasure when the gay girl's tongue touched upon the subject of her affections, although clouds and darkness hung over the prospect, and all hope of their gratification was but faint indeed. At the same time she was, perhaps, a little fearful of the topic ever being carried too far, and, therefore, after a smile, in which melancholy mingled, in some degree, with plea-



sure, she returned to her own jest with her fair follower, without adding one word more to a subject on which both, in happier circumstances, might have been well pleased to speak more freely.

“Nay, nay, Alice,” she exclaimed, “that was an artful turn, my sweet friend: but you shall not escape so readily. Tell me, did you not put it in your father’s head, to think what a fine thing it would be for me to visit all the different towns in Flanders, and win the love of the good burghers? And did you not yourself lay out the very plan of our journey from Ghent to Alost, and thence to Brussels, and thence to Louvaine, and thence to Tirlemont? And have you not kept me three full days at Tirlemont; and, at last, have you not brought me up the fair river Geete, with our hawks upon our hands, and nobody to watch us, till we are within a league or two of this same castle of Hannut? — Fie, Alice! fie! it is a decided conspiracy!”

Alice laughed gaily, and replied, “Well, lady, if it can be proved, even by the best



logic of your pretty lips, that I do wish to see my lover, I know no woman, that has one, who does not do so too, from the farmer's milkmaid, with her pail upon head, to the Princess of Burgundy, on her white Spanish jennet."

Mary laughed and sighed. "You own it, then," she answered: "I thought, when last night you were striving hard to persuade me to visit the castle of Hannut, and have my future fate laid bare by the dark and awful skill of this learned uncle of yours, that there was a leaf in the book of fortune, or rather in the book of life, that you would well like to read for yourself. But tell me, Alice," she added, more seriously, "tell me something more of this lover, to whom, it seems, you are affianced. There appears some mystery about him, and you, of course, must know more of him than any one else."

"Nay, quite the contrary, my dear lady and mistress," replied Alice of Imbercourt; "that shows how little you know of the sad race called men. His being my lover is the very



reason, of all others, why I should know less of him than any other person."

"How so?" demanded the Princess, with a look of surprise.

"Why, simply because, from the moment he becomes my lover," replied Alice of Imbercourt, "he takes the very best possible care to hide every evil quality in his nature and disposition, upon the full and preconcerted plan of not letting me see any one of them till such time as he is my husband; then, out they come! But that is not all," she continued; "that would only hide a part of his character; but, at the same time that he takes these precautions, I, on my part, like every wise woman, make up my mind, on no account whatever to see any little fault or failing that he may accidentally display — at least till such time as he is my husband. Then, of course, when nothing more is to be gained or lost, I shall, beyond doubt, take as much pains to find them out as another, and he will take as little to hide them."

"That is a bad plan, Alice," replied the



Princess; "that is a bad plan; find out the faults, if you can, in the lover, while your hand is your own, and your will is free. See them not at all in your husband; for blindness in such a case is woman's best policy. But you mistake me, Alice; it was not of his mind I spoke, but of his situation; for, when questioning my Lord of Imbercourt the other day, he called him your uncle's nephew: now, none of our wise heralds ever heard, it seems, of such a nephew."

A slight blush came up into the cheek of Alice as the Princess spoke; but she replied frankly, "In truth, dear lady, I know nothing on that score; and upon such subjects I have ever thought that if my father was satisfied, I had no reason to complain. All I know is, that my cousin Hugh was brought up at the court of France,—has fought in the civil wars of England, and under Galeas, Duke of Milan,—has gained honour, and knighthood, and glory in the field,—is gentle, and kind, and tender, and affectionate to me; and is—" she added, with a laugh and a blush at the praises which



she was pouring forth, and which she felt must betray the whole secret of her heart, but which yet she could not or would not restrain,—“and is as handsome a man, and as graceful a cavalier as ever entered hall or mounted horse.”

The Princess smiled, and answered, “Well, well, if he be all that, fair Alice, you are right — quite right — to ask no farther questions. But how is it, good Bartholomew,” she cried, turning to one of the falconers, — “but how is it? — can you find no bird, in all the length of this fair stream, for us to fly our hawks?”

“So please your Grace,” replied the man, “the air is so sultry that the herons will hardly wade where there is no shelter; but up beyond those bushes, where the bank with its long sedges jets out into the stream, I doubt not we may raise something yet.”

The whole party accordingly rode on; and the judgment of the experienced falconer was found quite right. Under the cool shadow of the bank, one of the feathered fishermen had advanced some way, with his long legs, and, taking fright at the noise of the horses, he



stretched forth his neck, gathered the air under his wings, and soared up at about the distance of twenty or thirty yards from the approaching party. The birds were instantly cast from the wrists of the ladies: the heron, finding himself pursued, and apparently a crafty old bird, strove to beat to windward of the hawks, flying as rapidly as possible, and yet keeping himself prepared for sudden defence. All the horses were put to full speed, and in a moment the whole scene became one of cry and confusion.

“Call the merlin up the wind! Call the merlin up the wind!” cried the Princess to the chief falconer! “See! see! he is towering; he will miss his stoop!”

“So ho! woa ho!” cried the falconer, with a loud whistle: “he will make his point yet, your Grace.” But the heron, finding himself over-reached, made a dip, skimmed, and evaded the fall or stoop of the falcon, which, being a young bird, had endeavoured to strike it at once, without being perfectly sure of its aim. The clamour and the galloping now became more eager than ever, the bird making di-



rectly for the wood, which it seemed likely to gain, notwithstanding the efforts of its pursuers.

The meadow was the finest even ground that could be conceived for such sport ; and the rein being freely given to each horse, the whole party dashed on at full speed, without seeing, or caring for, the massy clouds, that, sweeping together over head, directly in the face of a light and flickering wind, that was blowing from the north-west, seemed to threaten a storm of some kind. The air, too, had that sultry, oppressive weight which one often feels in the neighbourhood of a great forest ; and the horses — animals peculiarly susceptible to the feelings produced by a quantity of electricity in the atmosphere — seemed more eager and fiery than usual, and were soon in a complete lather of foam.

The grey merlin which had been carried by Mary of Burgundy retrieved the error of its first eagerness, and, cutting between the heron and the wood, kept it off for some time over the meadow and the stream. The sport was thus in its highest point of interest, and the horses in full



career, when a sudden flash of lightning broke across their path, and startled the whole party. Each horse involuntarily recoiled. The Princess and Alice of Imbercourt both kept their seats, but the young lady who followed them, less skilful in her management, was thrown violently to the ground ; while her horse, wild with fright, dashed madly across the meadow, and plunged into the stream. The falconers rode forward to whistle back their hawks — the service most important in their eyes, — and one of the grooma galloped after the frightened horse, in order to catch him ere he was irrecoverably lost. But the rest of the party, instantly dismounting, surrounded the poor girl who had met with the accident, whom they found severely bruised, but not otherwise dangerously hurt. She complained bitterly, however, and, as if conscious that she was not a very interesting person otherwise, made the most of her misfortune to engross attention.

The horse and the hawks were soon recovered, but it became now the question, what was to be the course of their farther proceed-



ings. Large drops of rain were beginning to fall—every thing portended a tremendous storm. The young lady who had fallen was too much bruised to sit her horse with ease, and was, or appeared to be, too much terrified to attempt it again. She, nevertheless, entreated the Princess and her companions to return as fast as possible towards Tirlemont, leaving her where she was, with some one to protect her, and to send a litter from the town to bring her home. But to this the Princess would by no means consent ; and it having been suggested by one of the grooms, who knew the country well, that at the distance of about half a mile in the wood there was a small chapel dedicated to Nôtre-Dame du bon Secours, it was determined that the whole party should proceed thither, and wait till the storm was over, or till one of the attendants could procure litters for the ladies from Tirlemont.

They accordingly proceeded on their way, under the guidance of the groom, who alone knew the situation of the chapel ; and, skirting round under the branches of the taller trees,



endeavoured to obtain shelter on their way from the large drops of rain that, slow and heavy, but far apart, seemed scarcely so much to fall as to be cast with violence from the heaven to the earth. The clouds, in the mean time, came rolling slowly up, seeming to congregate over the forest from every part of the sky; but still it was some minutes before another flash of lightning followed the first, which had startled their horses, and the whole party had reached the glade in the wood, which the groom assured them led direct to the chapel, ere a second bright blaze broke across the gloomy air, now shadowed into a kind of mid-day twilight by the dull, thick, leaden clouds above. The roar of the thunder followed a few seconds after; and though it was evident that the storm had not reached that degree of intensity which it was destined soon to attain, the Princess and her attendants did not neglect the warning, but hastened on as rapidly as possible, though the long grass, cut merely by the tracks of wood-carts, and mingled thickly with brambles and many sorts of weeds, impeded them greatly on their way.



The road — if the glade or opening in the forest could so be called — led on in that straight line of direct progression, which seems to have been the original plan of road-making in most countries, proceeding with a proud disdain of obstacles and difficulties, into the deepest valleys, and up the sides of the steepest hills, without one effort by sweep or turn of any kind to avoid either. Thus, in a few minutes after the entrance of the Princess's party into the forest, the groom led the way over the side of a hill, down the steep descent of which the trunks and arching boughs of the trees might be seen in long perspective, forming a regular alley, filled with a kind of dim and misty light. At the end of the descent, however, the trees, in some degree, broke away to the westward, and a steep hill rose suddenly before the travellers, which seemed, at its original formation, to have started up so abruptly, as to have shaken a part of the primeval forest from one of its sides. The other side was clothed with tall trees to the very top. Over the shoulder of this hill, — just between the part which remained wooded,



and the part which, sloping down to the forest below, lay for the distance of several acres, either entirely bare or merely covered with scattered brushwood, — the road, now assuming a sandy appearance, climbed straight up to a spot where a small building with a conical roof was seen standing out from the dark wood, at the very top of the rise, and cutting sharp upon a gleam of yellow light, which — dimmed by the falling shower, and fast closing up under the gathering clouds — yet lingered in the western sky.

The sight of the chapel, for so it was, gave fresh vigour to all the party; and Mary, with her followers, hastened up, and reached the little shrine before another flash of lightning took place. The chapel, as usual with such buildings in that age, was constructed for the mere purpose of affording a temporary refuge to the benighted or storm-staid traveller, or of giving the pious and devout an opportunity of offering up their prayers or thanksgivings for a favourable journey begun or completed, before an image of the Virgin, which filled a niche in the far part of the edifice, protected from



profaning hands by a strong grating of iron. Whether the building itself was kept up by casual donations, or by some small endowment, I do not know; but, at all events, the funds which supported it were too small for the maintenance of an officiating priest; and hermits, who had occasionally supplied the place in former ages, were now becoming "of the rare birds of the earth," at least in the north of Europe. Thus the chapel was totally vacant when the Princess and her attendants reached it; and after offering up a prayer at the shrine, while one of the grooms was despatched to Tirlemont, to give notice of Mary's situation, the most courageous of the party which remained placed themselves at the door of the little building, to watch the progress of the approaching storm. As no one dreamed of profaning the sanctity of the place, by making it a shelter for their horses, the grooms received orders to tie them as strongly as possible under some of the neighbouring trees; and one was thus secured under a large elm, which rose a few yards in advance of the chapel.



The commanding situation of the building, being pitched high up on one of the most elevated hills of the forest, gave a wide view over the country around, and afforded one of the most beautiful forest scenes that the mind of man can imagine. First, beyond the little sandy road by the side of which the chapel stood, extended, as I have before said, several acres of broken mountain turf, sloping down with a considerable descent, and only interrupted here and there by a solitary tree, or a clump of bushes. Beyond it again the eye wandered over many miles of rich wood land, clothed in all the splendid hues of autumn, from the dark shadowy evergreen to the bright golden yellow of the sear aspen; and where the ocean of woods ended, it caught the faint blue lines of a level country beyond.

At the time I speak of, the sky was full of clouds, and the yellow light which had struggled for a time to keep its place in the heavens was now totally obscured. Large dull masses, as hard and defined as if formed of some half-molten metal, rolled slowly along the heavens, while



across them floated far more rapidly some light fleecy vapours of a whitish grey. From the far extreme of these clouds was seen pouring in long straight lines the heavy shower — in some places so dark as totally to obscure every thing beyond; but in other spots so thin and clear, that through the lines of rain the eye caught the prospect of a bright and sunshiny country, over which the clouds had not yet extended themselves, — not unlike the distant view of bright scenes, which the unquelled hopes of early life still show us through the tears and storms that at times beset our youth.

Each moment seemed to add something to the gloom of the sky; and scarcely were the party well housed, when another bright flash, followed close by the roar of the thunder, passed eagerly over the scene. The young lady who had fallen from her horse remained close to the shrine; but Mary of Burgundy, with her arm through that of Alice of Imbercourt, still stood by the door, looking out upon the prospect below them. The last flash of lightning, however, was so near, that Mary's eye caught a small



thin line of pale-coloured but excessively vivid light, which seemed to dart like a fiery serpent between herself and the near tree, under which one of the horses was tied.

"Alice, I will look no more," she said : "that flash was so near it made me giddy;" and withdrawing her arm, she retired into the farther part of the chapel, and closed another small door which opened from the right-hand side of the shrine into the forest behind the building.

"You are not afraid, lady?" said Alice with a smile.

"No, certainly not afraid," replied Mary ; "for I know that He whose weapon is the lightning, can strike as well in the palace or the tower as in the open field ; but still it is useless to deny, that there is something very awful in the sights and sounds of such a storm as this. It seems as if one were in the presence, and heard the voice of the Almighty."

"It is very grand," replied Alice of Imbercourt ; "but from my youth I have been taught to look upon the storm as the finest spectacle in nature; and I would rather see the lightnings



go tilting on their fiery horses through the sky, and hear the roaring trumpets of the thunder, than sit in the gayest pavilion that ever was stretched with hands, to witness the brightest tournament that ever monarch gave."

"You are poetical, Alice," cried the Princess; "had old George Chatelain been here he would have made fine verses out of that speech — but, gracious heaven, what a flash!"

As she spoke there came, indeed, one of those tremendous flashes of lightning that literally wrap the whole sky in flame, and for the brief space that it endured, lighted up every part of the inside of the chapel, with a brightness that was painful to the eye. At the same time Alice, who still stood by the door, saw clearly the brighter waving line of more intense fire which accompanied the broad flash dart from a spot nearly above their heads, and streaming downward with unequalled rapidity, strike one of the noblest trees on the edge of the wood below, and tear it in one moment into atoms. She almost fancied she could hear the rending groan of the stout oak, as it was shivered by the



bolt of heaven; but nearly in the same instant the thunder followed, with a sound as if a thousand rocks had been cast on the roof above their heads; and another and another flash succeeded, before the report of the first had died away. Then came a momentary pause — calm, heavy, and silent, without a breath of air to stir the boughs, or to relieve the sultry oppressiveness of the atmosphere, and without a sound, save the fall of an occasional drop of rain. The duration of this state of repose was but brief. The whole air over the forest seemed surcharged with electricity; and in a moment after, with a loud whizzing noise, not unlike that of a musket bullet when it passes near the head, a large ball of fire rushed rapidly past the chapel, in a line raised not more than a few yards above the ground, and pitched upon the point of a rock at a little distance below, where, after quivering and wavering for a moment, it broke into a thousand fragments with a loud explosion, and vanished entirely. The lightning and the thunder now succeeded each other so rapidly, that there seemed scarcely an in-



stant's interval; and flash after flash, roar after roar, continued without intermission, while every now and then the sight of a tree rent to atoms in the distant prospect marked the work of the lightning; and the forest, and the rocks, and the hills echoed and re-echoed the thunder, so that the sound became absolutely unceasing.

This had continued for about half an hour, and still Alice of Imbercourt had remained gazing out upon the scene, as well as the old cavalier, who accompanied them as their principal attendant, when she suddenly exclaimed,—“Good God! how extraordinary! there seems to be a thick cloud gathering upon the edge of the wood, and rolling up the hill towards us, and sweeping the ground as it comes. Holy Virgin! the lightning is flashing out of it like that from the sky! This is very terrible, indeed!”

“Come back, Alice, I beseech—I entreat!” exclaimed the Princess: “you may lose your sight or your life—you are tempting your fate.”

But Alice did not seem to hear, for she still continued gazing out from the door, although it



was very evident that she now had also taken alarm.

"Now, gracious God! be merciful unto us," she exclaimed; "for this is the most terrible thing I ever saw! It is fast rolling up the hill!"

"Come away, lady, come away," cried the old cavalier, seizing her by the arm, and leading her from the door; "this is no sight to look upon;" and he drew her back towards the Princess.

Alice once more turned her head to gaze, and then, as if overcome with what she saw, she cast herself down upon her knees, throwing her arms around Mary, as if to protect her from the approaching destruction, exclaiming,—“Oh, my Princess! my Princess! God protect thee in this terrible hour!”

Mary's hand was very cold; but in the moment of great danger she showed herself more calm and firm than her more daring companion. "God will protect me," she said, in a soft low voice, "if such be His good pleasure; and if not, His will be done."

As she spoke, a tremendous flash illuminated



the whole of the inside of the building, accompanied — not followed — by a crash, as if two worlds had been hurled together in their course through space.

The eyes of every one in the chapel, it is probable, were closed at that moment, for no one saw the small door by the side of the shrine thrown open. But the first who looked up was Mary of Burgundy, and a sudden cry, as she did so, called the attention of all the rest. They instantly perceived the cause of the Princess's surprise and alarm; for close beside her, in the midst of the chapel, stood a tall powerful man, habited in the ordinary equipment of a man at arms of that day; with the unusual circumstance, however, of every part of his garb being of a peculiar shade of green; which colour was also predominant in the dress of half a dozen others who appeared at the door by the shrine.

He gave no one time to express their surprise. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "do you not see the ground lightning coming up the hill! Fly, fly for your lives, it will be



over the chapel in a moment. Matthew, catch up some of the women. Karl, take that one that has fainted. Let the men follow me as fast as possible, and we shall soon be out of the direction it is taking."

So saying, and without farther ceremony, he caught up Alice of Imbercourt in his powerful arms. One of his companions lifted the Princess, and another raised the form of the young lady who had fallen from her horse in the morning, and whose terror had now cast her into a swoon, and, darting through the door by which they had entered, the Vert Gallant of Hannut and his companions passed out into that part of the forest which swept up to the back of the chapel. Striking on as fast as possible towards the east, he took his way over the other edge of the hill, in a direction opposite to that in which Alice had been looking. The lightning flashed around them as they went, the thunder roared loud at every step, and the rain, which had ceased for a time, began again to drop; at first slowly, but after a few minutes in a more heavy and continuous shower, which, pattering thick



through the withered leaves of the wood, drenched the unfortunate hawking party to the skin.

“Thank God for that!” exclaimed the Vert Gallant: “this rain will drown yon cursed cloud, and we shall get rid of the ground lightning.”

These were the only words he spoke; but, with rapid steps, he continued to bear on his fair burden for nearly a quarter of an hour, with apparently the same ease, and in somewhat of the same position, that a mother carries her child. Two of his sturdy companions followed loaded in the same way; — and so complete was the helpless terror of the whole party who had accompanied Mary of Burgundy, that they yielded themselves passively, and without a word of enquiry, to the guidance of the green riders; a body of men who acknowledged no law, though a sort of generous and chivalric spirit amongst themselves seemed, in some degree, to supply the place of the authority they had cast off. It is true, indeed, that resistance or question would have been in vain; for the

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superior numbers of these free gentlemen of the forest set at defiance all opposition on the part of the Princess's attendants, and a sort of taciturnity seemed to reign amongst them which did not at all encourage enquiry.

After proceeding steadily and rapidly for the space of time above mentioned, over a rough and uneven road, sometimes down the side of a wooded hill, where no unpractised foot could have kept its hold — sometimes through deep ravines, which the torrents of rain that were now falling had converted into water-courses — sometimes over the trunks of trees that had been felled and shattered by the fire of heaven — with the lightning flashing round their heads, and the thunder rolling above them, the Vert Gallant and his companions at length reached a deep dell, from one side of which rose up a steep and rocky bank, forming the base of the hill which they had just descended.

At the height of a few yards above the bottom of the valley, which was itself marshy and filled with long flags and rushes, was the mouth of a low-browed cave, to which the Vert Gallant



immediately directed his steps. He was obliged to bow his head to enter; but within, it became more lofty; and, though it did not run above nine or ten yards into the mountain, the cavity afforded a complete shelter from the storm and rain. The moment he had entered, the leader of the free companions gently freed Alice from his arms; and then, in a low and respectful voice, he said,—“You will here, fair ladies, find some security. Keep as far as you can from the mouth of the cave, and there is little fear of any danger. You, Sirs,” he continued, in a sterner tone, turning to the male followers of the Princess, “should have known better than to have placed this lady,—who, if I judge right, must be an object of no small solicitude to every subject of the House of Burgundy,—in the most exposed and dangerous situation of the whole forest.”

“Good faith, Sir Green Knight,” said the old gentleman who had accompanied the Princess, “we certainly did not know that it was so dangerous, or we should neither have placed her in it, nor ourselves, as you may well sup-



pose. And now, Sir," he continued, with a voice the slight tremulousness of whose tone showed that he was not without some apprehensions of another kind — "and now, Sir, that you have the lady in your power — be she Princess or not — I trust that you will deal fairly and honourably with her. Our purses are, of course, at your disposal, as well as our jewels, &c.; but I give you notice that ——"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the Vert Gallant, the beaver of whose helmet was still down, "Talk not to me of purses, Sir, and jewels! — Madam," he continued, turning to the Princess, "suffer not, I beseech you, the vain and vulgar fears of this old man to affect you for a moment: the Vert Gallant of Hannut takes no purses from wandering travellers, nor draws the sword against ladies, far less against the Princess of Burgundy. Rest here in safety, with your fair companions," he added, turning slightly towards Alice of Imbercourt; "and we, who have brought you hither, and have been your unseen attendants ever since you were flying your hawks by the side of the river, will guard you



as well, or better, than if you were in your father's palace."

"I owe you many thanks, Sir," replied Mary; "more, indeed, than I can at present express; for this dreadful storm has left my ideas somewhat confused. However, I am satisfied that to your prompt assistance I stand indebted for my life."

"Perhaps, Madam, you do," replied the Vert Gallant; "for I feel convinced that, had that cloud reached the chapel before you quitted it, the coronet of Burgundy would be now without an heiress. Think me not ungenerous, Madam," he added, "if I ask a boon in return. It is this — that if, some day, I should need your voice to support my petition with your father — or if you should at the time hold the reins of government yourself, when I may have occasion to make a request before the chair of Burgundy — you will give me your influence in the one case, or grant my desire in the other."

There was something in the tone and in the manner of the speaker at once so gentle and so lofty, that Mary of Burgundy could not but



think that his present adventurous life must be one more of necessity than of choice ; and she doubted not, that the petition to which he alluded must be for pardon for his past offences. She gazed at him for a moment or two before she replied, as he stood towering above the seven or eight strong men who accompanied him, and who had now grouped themselves round the mouth of the cave, watching, as it appeared, every word of their leader's mouth with a sort of reverential attention.

" If it be wrong, Sir," she replied, " for simple individuals to make rash promises, it is still more so for princes. But where gratitude, such as I owe you, is concerned, even prudence might be ungenerous. I must qualify, however, in some degree, the promise you desire, and say, that if your request, when it is made, prove nothing contrary to my own honour or dignity, I will give it all my influence with my father, should it depend upon him ; or grant it myself, should it depend upon me.— Does that satisfy you ? "

" Most fully, Madam," replied the Vert



Gallant; "and I return you deep thanks for your kind assent."

"I doubt not," said Mary, "that what you have to ask will be far less than a compensation for the service you have rendered me. However, accept this jewel," she added, taking a ring from her finger and giving it to him, "as a testimony of the promise I have made; and with it let me add, many thanks for your honourable courtesy."

The leader of the free companions received the ring with due acknowledgments; and, after a few words more upon the same subject, he bowed low, as if to take his leave, and made a step towards the mouth of the cavern.

"You are not, surely, going to expose yourself to such a storm as this," exclaimed Alice of Imbercourt, with a degree of eagerness that made her mistress smile, and declare afterwards — when, in a place of security, they could look upon the dangers of the forest as a matter of amusement — that Alice had certainly been smitten with the distinction which the Vert Gallant had shown her, in carrying her in his



own arms through the wood, although he knew that a Princess was present.

"The storm is abating, Lady," replied the freebooter; "and, besides, we fear no weather. I myself go to give notice to those who can receive you as you should be received, that such a noble party require better shelter and entertainment than we poor adventurers can afford you. My men, though they must keep out of sight, will be near enough to yield you protection and assistance, on one blast of a horn. Horns are strange magical things in this wood," he added; "for though all the hunters in the world might go blowing their mots, from one end of the forest to the other, without seeing aught but boar or deer, I will soon show you that we can conjure up beasts of another kind."

So saying, he approached the mouth of the cavern, and wound his horn with a long, shrill, peculiar blast; when, in a moment after, from the opposite part of the wood, a man, bearing the appearance of a mounted squire, trotted rapidly forth, leading a strong black charger,



which he at once brought up to the mouth of the cave. A few words whispered by the Vert Gallant to the men who had accompanied him hitherto, caused them instantly to quit the place where they had taken refuge; and, dispersing themselves over the side of the hill, the whole were in a few minutes lost to the sight amongst the trees and bushes. Their leader, once more, bowed low to the Princess, sprang upon his horse, dashed rapidly down the rough and uneven side of the hill, plunged through the marsh that lined the bottom of the valley, and, in a moment after, was seen, followed by his squire, winding in and out through the tall trees on the opposite slope, till the turn of the hill hid him from view.

It was the eyes of Alice of Imbercourt that thus followed him on his course; for the Princess had seated herself on a mass of rock in the farther extreme of the cave; and her other young attendant, stupified with all the terrors and dangers she had gone through, continued sitting in silence on the ground, where the soldier who had carried her had set her down,



and still kept her hands clasped over her eyes, as if every moment would show her some horrible sight.

The storm had, nevertheless, abated considerably already. The rain, it is true, continued to pour down in torrents, and an occasional flash of lightning still broke across the sky; but it was dim, and as if half extinguished by the deluge through which it glared. The thunder, too, followed at a longer interval; and each succeeding flash was at a greater lapse of time from the one that preceded it.

Thus about an hour and a half passed away, during which the different members of the falconing party amused themselves as they best might; the groom talking with the falconers about the gallant horses they had left tied at the top of the hill, lamenting over the fright and drenching they must have been exposed to, and expressing some apprehension that the good gentleman in green, who had hurried them away so fast from the chapel, might take advantage of their absence to carry off their good horses, the worst of which, he declared, was



worth fifty golden crowns of Florence at the lowest computation. The falconers, on the other hand, who had taken care to bring away their birds with them, busied themselves actively in providing for the comfort of their hawks; and each administered to the falcon under his special charge a small ball of choice medicaments, extracted from a pouch that they carried by their sides, in order to guard the stomachs of those noble fowls from any evil as a consequence of the storm.

The old gentleman, who might be considered — what we should call in the present day — the chaperon of the party, stood by the side of the Princess, and addressed to her, from time to time, with sweet unmeaning smiles and courtly language, a variety of easy flowing sentences, very pleasant and harmonious, but signifying nothing. Alice, on her part, generally remained silent and thoughtful, though seemingly a little agitated, and, perhaps, not displeased, at the thought of revisiting the castle of Hannut. Sometimes she would sit at the side of the Princess, and speak with her, with all the light



gaiety of her character; but, at others, she would fall into long lapses of deep and silent thought; or would stand at the mouth of the cave, and watch the diminishing rain and the storm as it passed away. Every minute it decreased in some degree; and even the poor girl who had fallen from her horse, and who was clearly the most timid of the whole party, began to look up, and to venture an occasional word to those around her.

At length, when the day was somewhat far advanced, a low whistle was heard at a considerable distance, was taken up by some one nearer, and then repeated from more than twenty places in the wood, till at last it sounded close by the cave. All then relapsed into profound silence; but, at the end of about ten minutes, a distinct trampling sound was heard; and, on looking forth from the mouth of the cave, Alice perceived, winding up from the very farthest extreme of the valley, a gay cavalcade, consisting of a couple of horse litters, escorted by about twenty spearmen on horseback, bearing the colours of the Lord of Hannut.



## CHAP. III.

THE sight of the approaching cavalcade was very acceptable to the party in the cave, who were not a little tired of their situation, as we may well conceive they would be, after having waited for nearly two hours, watching the dying away of a thunderstorm, which, after all, left no better prospect than that the hard leaden clouds which had poured forth the lightning would soften into the showery haze of an unsettled autumn night.

The troop, however, seemed to approach but slowly, — every now and then pausing and looking round the valley, as if doubtful of the exact place to which their steps should be directed. At length Alice took an impatient step out into the shower, and was followed by one of the falconers; who soon attracted the notice of the horsemen by one of the long and peculiar whoops practised in his vocation. The moment after, a young cavalier, habited in the



furs and embroideries which designated a man of noble rank in the county, dashed forward from the rest; and the next instant Hugh de Mortmar was by the side of his fair Alice.

A few words of explanation sufficed. A strange horseman, he said, whom the warder described as bearing the appearance of one of the free companions who infested the country, had given notice at the barbican of the castle that the Princess Mary and her train were storm-staid in that valley which in the forest bore the name of "The Valley of the Marsh;" and that, of course, he had instantly set out to tender his service and assistance.

The young gentleman then, with deep respect, tendered his aid to the Princess. Mary and her attendants were soon placed in the litters, or mounted on the spare horses; and, as it was too late to think of returning to Tirlémont, the whole party wound onward towards the castle of Hannut. At the earnest request of the poor groom, however, as the road by the chapel was not longer than that by which the young noble had come, it was preferred in re-



turning to the castle, in order to relieve the horses that had been tied in the neighbourhood ; and, choosing a longer but easier ascent than that which had been trod so rapidly by the Vert Gallant some hours before, the Princess was soon once more on the spot from which she had been carried in the thunderstorm.

The scene that she there beheld was not a little awful. Three of the walls of the chapel, indeed, remained, but that was all ; and the time-dried wood-work that had supported the tall conical roof, now lay on what had once been the floor, still blackened and smouldering, though the fire which had been kindled by the lightning was now half extinguished by the subsequent rain. The chapel itself, however, though it showed how terrible her own fate might have been, was not, perhaps, the most fearful object that the spot presented. The tall, majestic tree which had stood alone at a few yards in advance of the building, was rent to the very ground ; and, amidst the shivered boughs and yellow leaves with which they were covered, lay motionless the beautiful horse that



had been tied there, with its strong and energetic limbs — but a few hours before full of wild life and noble fire — now cold and stiff, — the wide expansive nostril, small and collapsed — the clear eye, dim and leaden, and the proud head cast powerless down the bank. There are few things show so substantially the mighty and awful power of death as to see a noble horse killed by some sudden accident. The moment before, it stands at the sublimest point of animal existence — as if the living principle were yielded to it in a greater share than any other thing, — and the next, it is shapeless carrion.

“Alas, the poor horse!” cried Mary, when her eyes fell upon the gallant beast lying stretched out beneath the tree: “alas, the poor horse!” But, by a natural link of association, her mind speedily reverted to herself, and the fate she had so narrowly escaped; and, closing her eyes, while the litter was borne on, she spent a few moments in thankful prayer.

The other horses, which had been tied at a little distance to the east of the chapel, ap-



peared to have broken their bridles through fear, and to have escaped. The trees under which they had been fastened remained uninjured by the storm, but no trace could be discovered of the animals themselves.

After the lapse of a few minutes spent in the search, the cavalcade moved on at a quicker pace; and Mary of Burgundy soon observed, with a smile, that Hugh de Mortmar, though often at the side of the litter in which she herself had been placed, offering all those formal attentions which her rank and station required, was still more frequently in the neighbourhood of the one which followed, and which contained her fair attendant, Alice, alone. The young waiting-woman, who shared the Princess's conveyance, remarked the particular attentions of the young lord also, and commented on it with some acerbity: but her jealous anger was soon repressed by Mary's sweet smile; and ere long the whole cavalcade wound through the barbican and the manifold gates of the castle of Hannut.

The retainers of the lord of the mansion,



drawn up in the court-yards, received the heiress of Burgundy and Flanders with feudal reverence; and the old Lord himself waited bare-headed to hand her from the vehicle which had conveyed her thither. She was instantly conducted to the apartments which Alice of Imbercourt had inhabited during her stay; and a part of the wardrobe which she had left behind, in the hope of a speedy return, now served to replace the damp garments of the Princess.

On returning from the chamber where she had made this change of dress to the little sitting-room or bower—as it was called, in the castles of the nobility of that time—the Princess found that supper had been laid out for her there, rather than in the hall; but at the same time she perceived, by the solitary cover which graced the table, while the Lord of Hannut and Hugh de Mortmar stood by to attend upon her, that she was to be served with all the formal state and ceremony of a sovereign princess.

“Nay, nay, my Lord,” she said, with a



stille, "I must not suffer all this. While I am here, I must have you consider me as a wandering damoiselle, whom you have delivered from danger and distress, and with whose rank or station you are unacquainted. All, therefore, of noble blood, must sit and partake with me of my supper, or I partake not myself."

The old Lord of Hannut, well knowing the formal ceremony maintained at the court of Burgundy, especially during the previous reign, would fain have remonstrated; but Mary cut him short, laying her hand kindly and gently on the old man's arm, and saying, in a soft and somewhat playful tone, "Must Mary of Burgundy command? — Well, then, be it so: — we command you, my Lord, to forget from this moment that there is any one beneath your roof but a dear friend of your sweet niece, Alice. Believe me," she added, more seriously, "that I know no greater enjoyment than to cast aside the trammels of state, and the cold weight of ceremony, and let my heart play free. To me, it is like what you, my



Lords, must have felt in unbuckling your armour after a long day's tournament."

Although the politeness of that day was of the stately and rigid kind, which might have required the Lord of Hannut to press further the ceremonious respect he had been about to show, he had too much of the truer politeness of the heart not to yield at once to the Princess's wishes thus expressed. More covers were instantly laid upon the table; and, assuming easily the station of host, in place of that of feudal subject, he treated his fair guests during supper with easy courtesy, mingled indeed, but not loaded, with respect.

The time passed pleasantly, and many a varied topic of conversation, regarding all those matters that were interesting in that age, wiled the minutes insensibly away. The ruder subjects, indeed, connected with the state of society as it then existed, — arms, and love, and the hunting-field, the news of the day, and the gossip of the town, — were the first things spoken of, as matters on which all could converse. But speedily, as each tried the other's

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powers, and found that there were less ordinary subjects on which they might communicate, the conversation turned to arts, to letters, and to the human mind. Hugh de Mortmar, whose travels through many lands had made him acquainted with things but scantily known even at the luxurious court of Burgundy, told of the efforts that Italy was then beginning to make to cast off the darkness which had so long hung over her states, described many a beautiful object that he had seen in the land of ancient arts, and rose into enthusiasm as he spoke of Medici, and of all that his magnificent efforts were likely to restore to Italy.

The newly discovered art of printing, too, was mentioned and discussed, and surmises of what it might one time accomplish were ventured on that occasion which would astonish those who see them only partly realised even in the present day. But it was, perhaps, one of the weaknesses of that age to attribute great and mysterious powers to every thing that was new and unusual; and, though clear and philosophical reasoning guided the Lord of Hannut

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to some of his anticipations in regard to printing, a vague degree of superstition, or perhaps it might better be called mysticism, added not a little. It was an easy transition from considering what the mind could do, to consider what the mind of man even then did; and Mary, half fearful of offending, yet with her curiosity not a little excited, led the conversation to those dark and mysterious arts, in the study of which the Lord of Hannut was supposed to pass the greater part of his time. Upon that branch of what were then called the dark sciences, which referred to the communication of mortal beings with the spiritual world, the old Lord was profoundly silent; but in the accuracy and reality of the art by which man was then supposed to read his future fate, by the bright and mysterious orbs of heaven, he expressed his most deep and sincere conviction.

“Many a long and weary night, many a deep and anxious thought, have I given,” he said, “to the subject; and, after the study of nearly forty years — after searching philosophy and



Scripture — after consulting the learned and the wise — I cannot doubt, Madam, that the science which the Chaldee shepherds studied and acquired in the plains of the East has come down to us, though not in the degree of clear accuracy to which they had brought it. Our calculations are sometimes slightly wrong, — a day — a month — a year sometimes, too early or too late, — but, on examination, I have always found that the error was in the imperfection of my own knowledge, not in a deceitful prognostication of the stars.”

The mind of woman is naturally more bent towards superstition than that of man. Mary of Burgundy had heard her father rave against astrologers as quacks and impostors, especially whenever their predictions did not accord with his own designs ; but she had heard him also express, on many an occasion, a desire for their council ; and even the abuse which he showered upon them, had shown her how much importance he attached to their predictions. Her belief, indeed, in their skill was not untinged with doubt — more, indeed, than was usual in



that age — but nevertheless it was still belief; and the calm and serious assurances of a man so famous for his wisdom and his skill as the Lord of Hannut, raised her belief, for the time, to certainty.

“I wish,” she replied with a smile, in answer to what he had last said — “I wish that I had here noted down, the correct day, and hour, and minute of my birth, that I might ask you, my Lord, to give me some insight into my future fate.”

“Were such really your wishes, lady,” replied the old nobleman, “your desire might soon be gratified. Too much interest have I ever felt in the house of Burgundy, not to obtain every particular of information necessary to discover exactly, as far as human science can reach, the destinies and fate of each child of that race.”

“Indeed!” cried Mary; “and can you, then, calculate for me, with any degree of accuracy, the lot that is likely to befall me in life?” — and her eyes, as she spoke, turned with a glance of enquiring interest towards



Alice of Imbercourt, as if for confirmation of her belief in the old Lord's skill.

"I can do more, lady," cried the Lord of Hannut: "I can show you a page where the whole is already written. While you were yet in the cradle, the interest which every one takes in those who are destined to rule nations, led me to draw the scheme of your nativity, and to learn every thing concerning your part in the future, which human science could discover. At the same time, the famous Anthony of Palermo separately undertook the same task; and, after mature deliberation, though at the distance of many hundred miles, each sent to the other a transcript of the result. The difference between our calculations was so slight as scarcely to merit the name; and I can now place before your eyes the two combined. I pledge my word to you, that more than eighteen years have elapsed since those calculations were made; and from the past, which you cannot doubt, you shall learn to judge of the future. Do you desire to see it?"

Mary turned somewhat pale, and paused ere



she replied ; but at length she answered, — “ I do ; and thank you, sir.”

“ The book in which that eventful page is written,” said the Lord of Hannut, “ must never leave the chamber where it has been so long preserved ; and I can but suffer one person to accompany you to its perusal. Choose then, Lady ! who shall it be ? ”

“ Alice,” said the Princess, “ will you go with me ? ”

“ Willingly — willingly,” replied the lively girl, “ if my uncle promise beforehand to call up no spirits to terrify us out of our senses.”

“ Let me beseech you not to go, madam,” exclaimed the old cavalier who had accompanied them thither : “ I never yet did know any one who attempted to pry into the hidden secrets of fate, who did not bitterly repent it.”

“ Madam,” said the Lord of Hannut, “ follow, I entreat, your own judgment alone. I urge you not to read or to forbear ; yet, as far as my memory serves me, you may read without much apprehension ; for though you may have many a painful scene yet to go through —



as who in life has not? — still there will be bright days, and many, before the end.”

“I will go, my Lord,” replied Mary. “Come, Alice, lend me your arm. My Lord, I will follow you.”

“Ho, without, there! — a light! — a light!” exclaimed the Lord of Hannut. “Pause yet a moment, lady. The sun is down, and the dim and narrow passages of this building are not to be trod by a stranger without more light than yon twilight sky will now afford. Bear a torch to the end of the gallery, Roger,” he added, speaking to a tall old man, who appeared at his summons. “Now, madam, permit me to lead you on.”

Thus speaking, he took the hand of the Princess reverently in his own, and led her from the chamber, followed by Alice of Imbercourt. The next moment, Mary found herself in a long gallery, pierced by many windows turned to the westward, through which might be seen the fiery streaks left by the setting sun upon the verge of the stormy sky. Manifold doors opened opposite to these windows, and



between the apertures the effigies of many a warrior frowned in steel, while the dull glare of the sunset flashed upon the polished armour, as each suit stood supported by its wooden figure, giving to all the prominent points a bloody hue — akin to the associations that the sight of those implements of war called up. At the end of this long corridor was a wide archway, at which, ere Mary had paced half the length of the gallery, a figure took its place, bearing a lighted torch ; and though the whole arrangement of the building was, in that age, more common, and consequently appeared less gloomy, than it would seem at present ; still there was an aspect of solemn grandeur about it, that raised, and yet saddened, the feelings of Mary of Burgundy, as she advanced in the firm belief that she was about to see the scheme of her future life laid open before her eyes.

Passing through the archway, with the torch-bearer preceding them, the old Lord and his two fair companions wound round the greater part of the building, in order to reach the apartment in which he pursued his studies,



without passing through the common hall ; and as they swept along the dark and narrow passages, with the torch-light flashing on the rude and mouldered stone, the sense of awe and expectation increased in the bosom of the Princess almost to the height of pain. Alice, too, felt it, and was profoundly silent ; and when at length they entered the chamber, in which the lonely hours of a long life had been spent in solitary and mysterious study, she gazed around her with a glance of curiosity and apprehension, which clearly showed that she herself had never set her foot within its walls before. The silver lamp hung lighted from the roof ; and the attendant with his torch drew back to let them pass, carefully avoiding, however, to set his foot across the threshold.

Mary's heart beat quick ; and she now began to ask herself whether she had any right to unveil that awful future over which the Almighty had cast so profound a shadow. What was she about to do ? To learn her fate, without the possibility of changing it — to acquire the knowledge of each event that was to happen, without the



power of avoiding or ruling it as it arose — to mark every danger while yet it lay in the womb of the future — to foreknow every pang while yet it was far distant — to sip the cup of agony and fear, drop by drop, long before fate compelled her to the draught — and to make each day miserable with the certainty of the morrow's sorrow.

While such thoughts passed through her mind, the old noble took down one of the large volumes from the cabinet, and unfastening the golden clasps with which it was bound, he laid it on the desk beneath the lamp. — “Madam,” he said, “you wished to know the fate of your future years;—it is now before you. Event by event I have marked the current of the past, and I have found no error yet in what is there written. Read, then, and with full confidence; for as sure as that we all live, and that we all must die, every turn of your coming existence is, there, written down.”

Mary took a step forward towards the book — laid her fair hand upon the yellow leaves — then paused, and gazed upwards for a moment.



"No!" she exclaimed at length — "no! it is wiser — it is better as it is! Most merciful was the decree of the Most High, that veiled the future in uncertainty. Forgive me, God, that I have sought to pry beyond the limits that thou thyself hast set! No, no! I will not read!" So saying, she drew hastily back, as if afraid of her own determination — cast open the door, and quitted the apartment.

The Lord of Hannut followed in some surprise. "Madam," he said, as he offered his hand to guide the Princess through the passages which the want of the torch now rendered totally dark, "I will not say you have done wrong; but you have, I own, surprised me."

"My Lord," replied the Princess, "I feel that I have done right, and have not suffered curiosity to triumph over reason; — at least," she added, with a smile, "you can say that there is one woman in the world, who, when the book of destiny was laid open before her, refused to read!"

"It is, indeed, a wonder which may well be noted down," replied the old nobleman; "but,



I believe, we have left another behind who may not have the same prudence — Alice.” He added aloud, — “ Alice ! beware ! Close the door, fair niece,” he added, as the young lady followed ; and having seen that it was fastened, he led the way back to the apartments which the Princess was to occupy for the night.

The party they now rejoined were, as may be naturally supposed, full of curiosity, which, however much restrained by respect, was sufficiently apparent ; and Mary, whose spirits had risen since her determination had been formed, told them at once, with gay good humour, that she had been afraid to read ; “ And therefore,” she said, “ I can tell you nothing of the future — for, thank God ! I know nothing.”

“ I am happy then, madam,” said Hugh de Mortmar, “ that I can tell you something of the present which may make up for the disappointment ; and what I can tell you is good. A messenger has arrived during your brief absence, bringing news from Lorraine. My Lord, your father is, as you doubtless know, in the field ; and, notwithstanding the checks of Granson and



Morat, has an army in better condition than ever. Of all this you are aware : but now you will be glad to hear, that Regnier of Lorraine, and all his Switzers, have fled before the Duke, across the Moselle ; that Dieulewart, Pont à Mouchon, and Pont, have surrendered to Burgundy ; and that the general of the enemy has left his army, and retired to Germany."

Such tidings in regard to the present, banished the thoughts of the future, which the preceding events had called up ; and the messenger, being summoned to the presence of the Princess, repeated the joyful news he had brought, in a more circumstantial manner ; and added the still more important information, in Mary's eyes, that her father was in good health, and had totally shaken off the lethargy of grief into which the defeat at Morat had thrown him for many weeks.

Thus passed the evening of the Princess's stay in the castle of Hannut ; and early the next morning, escorted by Hugh de Mortmar and a large body of armed retainers, as well as a party of her own attendants, who had arrived from



Tirlemont, she passed through the forest, and proceeded on the visitation which she was making to various cities in the county of Flanders.

In each and all she was received with loud and joyful acclamations ; for as both Philip of Commines and good John Molinet observed of their countrymen, the Flemings, they always adored the heirs of the county till they were invested with the real authority ; but from the moment they succeeded to the sovereignty, they became objects of as much detestation and abuse, as they before were, of love and applause. Thus, as she progressed through the land, Mary fondly fancied that the Flemings had been a people greatly traduced, and believed that their hearts and best wishes would surely follow a mild and just government. That such, under all circumstances and in every time, should be the character of her own sway, she firmly resolved ; and she returned to Ghent, convinced that peace, good will, and union of purpose, would ever reign between her and the honest commons of Flanders.



## CHAP. IV.

WE must make our narrative of the events which took place in Ghent precede the arrival of the Princess in that city by a few days, as her return did not take place till the evening of the 10th of January, 1477; and it may be necessary to mark particularly some circumstances which occurred on the 8th of that month; premising, however, that the local government had been left in the hands of the Lord of Imbercourt during her absence.

The scene to which we wish to introduce the reader, was a small dark chamber in one of the largest mercantile houses in Ghent, but far removed from the warehouse or the shop, and fitted up with a degree of luxury and elegance only known in Europe, at that time, to the great Flemish or Venetian merchants. The walls were hung with rich tapestry; carpets of the same fabric covered the floor. Silver lamps and small round mirrors — then one of the



most costly articles of furniture — hung around; and, in short, the whole interior of the room presented an aspect of wealth and comfort which might well rival the modern days.

At the time I speak of, however, various circumstances combined to show that the apartment was the abode of sorrow. Only one of the lamps was lighted. The cloak and bonnet of a citizen of the time were cast recklessly on the ground, near the door. A small dagger lay upon the table; and, in a seat before it, with his eyes buried in his hands, and his body shaken with convulsive sobs, sat the little druggist, Ganay, displaying that sort of dejected disarray of dress, and careless fall of the limbs, which denotes so strongly that despair has mastered the citadel of hope in the human heart.

From time to time, the sobs and groans which struggled from his bosom, gave way to momentary exclamations — sometimes loud and fierce, sometimes muttered and low. “He was my son,” he would exclaim, — “ay, notwithstanding all, he was my son! He had robbed me, it is true — taken my gold — resisted my



authority — scoffed at my rebuke — but still my blood poured through his veins; — and to die such a death — by the common hangman ! — like a dog ! — to hang over the gate of the city, for the ravens to eat him, like the carrion of a horse !” and once more, he gave way to tears and groans. Then again he would exclaim, — “ The fiends ! the incarnate fiends ! — to slaughter my poor boy like a wolf — to refuse prayers, entreaties, gold ! — can they be fathers ? — out upon them, cold-hearted tigers ! — he has done no more than many a man has done. What though the woman was wronged ? — what though her brother was slain in the affray ? — Do not these proud nobles do worse every day ? — Besides, she should have had gold, oceans of gold ; — but now I will have revenge — deep, bitter, insatiable revenge ! ” and he shook his thin bony hand in the air, while the fire of hell itself seemed gleaming from the bottom of his small dark eyes.

At that moment there was a noise heard without ; and the voices of two persons in some degree of contention, as if the one strove to



prevent the other from entering, sounded along the passage.

"Out of my way!" cried the one, in a harsh, sharp, grating tone; "I tell you, boy, I must enter; I have business with your master. I enter every where, at all times and seasons."

"But don't you know, sir, what has happened?" cried the other voice; "my master is in great affliction, and bade us deny sight of him to every one."

"I know all about it, much better than you do, lad," replied the first. "Out of my way, I say, or I will knock your head against the wall."

The little druggist had started up at the first sounds; and, after gazing upon the door for a moment, with the fierce intensity of the tiger watching his victim before the spring, he seemed to recognise the voice of the speaker who sought to force his way in; and, snatching the dagger hastily from the table, he placed it in his bosom, wiped away the marks of tears from his eyes, and then cast himself back again in his seat.

Almost at the same moment the door opened,



and Maillotin du Bac, the prévôt of the Duke of Burgundy, appeared, together with a lad, who seemed to be a serving boy of the druggist's. The Prévôt was habited in a different manner, on the present occasion, from that in which we have before depicted him. He was no longer either clad in arms, as he had appeared at the castle of Hannut, or wrapped in bandages, as he had shown himself before the council. His dress was now a rich and costly suit of fine cloth, splendidly embroidered, together with a bonnet of the same colour, in which, as was then very customary amongst the nobles, he wore the brush of a fox, slightly drooping on one side, as it may sometimes be seen in the cap of the successful hunter of the present day. Over his more gaudy apparel, however, he had cast a long black cloak, bordered with sable, which he probably used, in general, on occasions of mourning.

“ This person will have entrance,” said the youth who accompanied him, addressing the little druggist, “ notwithstanding all I can do to prevent him.”



"Hinder him not," replied Ganay; "but shut the door, and get thee gone."

The boy readily obeyed the order he received; and Maillotin du Bac, advancing into the room, saluted the druggist with some degree of formal courtesy, not unmixed with that solemnity of aspect wherewith men do reverence to griefs they personally feel but little.

"Health and better cheer to you, Master Ganay!" he said, taking a seat close by the druggist — "health and better cheer to you! This is a sad business indeed, and I wish to speak over it with you."

The druggist eyed him for a moment or two in bitter silence, while his heavy eyebrows were drawn together till they met, and almost concealed the small piercing eyes beneath them.

"You are kind, Sir Prévôt," he said, in a sneering tone; "you are mighty kind; but let me tell you, that were it not that I hear there has been something strange — I know not whether to say friendly — in the conduct that you have pursued through all that is gone, I would soon show you how a man deserves to be



treated, who forces himself upon a father on the day of his son's death."

"Why now, Master Ganay, I can bear with you a great deal," replied the Prévôt; "and therefore say what you will, I shall not be offended: but you very well know, that I would not myself, nor would I suffer any of my men to have any thing to do with this bad business, either in regard to the arrest or the execution."

"Murder! call it murder!" cried the druggist, grasping the arm of his chair, with a convulsive motion of his hand.

"Well, murder be it," replied the Prévôt, "though they say they did it all by law. But, however, I did not choose to have any thing to do with it; not alone from considering the right or wrong of the matter, but because I had a regard for yourself, and that there are two or three little feelings in common between us."

"Ay, indeed!" cried the druggist; "and what may they be?"

Maillotin du Bac laid his large, strong, bony hand upon the arm of the druggist, and fixing his keen hawk-like eyes upon his face, replied,



— “First and foremost — hatred to Imbercourt.”

“Ha!” cried the druggist, almost starting from his seat; “how knew you that I hated him? — at least, before this last dark deed?”

“Because,” replied Maillotin du Bac, “some ten years ago, when the people of Ghent were pressing boldly round the Duke, and shouting for their privileges, I saw this Imbercourt give a contemptuous buffet to a man who had caught him by the robe. Do you remember such a thing? The man was a rich druggist of Ghent; and in his first fury he got a knife half way out of his bosom — not unlike that which lies in your own, Master Ganay — but the moment after he put it up again, as he saw the Duke’s horsemen riding down; and, with a smooth face and pleasant smile, said to the man who had struck him, — ‘We shall meet again, fair sir.’”

“Ay, and we have met again — but how? — but how?” cried the druggist, grasping the arm of the Prévôt tight as he spoke; “how have we met again? Not as it should have been — for



vengeance on the insolent oppressor; — no; but to go upon my knees before him — to humble myself to the very dust — to drop my tears at his feet — to beseech him to spare my child's life."

"And he spurned you away from him, of course," replied Maillotin du Bac, eagerly.

"No, no," answered the druggist; "no, no, he did not spurn me, — but he did worse — he pretended to pity me. He declared that what I asked was not in his power — that he had not pronounced the sentence — that it was the eschevins of the city — and that he had no right nor authority to reverse the judgment. Oh! that I should have been the cursed idiot to have humbled myself before him — to be pitied, to be commiserated by him whose buffet was still burning on my cheek — to be called poor man! unhappy father! — to be prayed to take some wine, as if I had not the wherewithal to buy it for myself. Out upon them all! — eternal curses light upon their heads, and sink them all to hell!" — and as he spoke, the unhappy man gave way to one of those fearful fits of wrath which



had divided his moments, during the whole of that day, with grief as bitter and unavailing.

Maillotin du Bac let the first gust of passion have its way, with that sort of calm indifferent management of the other's grief which showed how familiar his ruthless office had rendered him with every expression of human misery and despair. "Ay," he said, after the tempest had in some degree past, "it was just like him; a cold calculating person enough he is, and was, and always will be! Much should I like to hear, though, how it happened that he had no power to grant pardon. Did not the Princess give him full power when she went?"

"He said, not! he said, not!" cried the druggist, eagerly; "and if he lied, with a father's tears dewing his feet — a father's agony before his eyes — he has purchased a place for himself as deep as Judas in the fiery abyss, — if there be such a place, at least, as monks would have us believe; — would it were true for his sake."

"But why did you not pray him," demanded the Prévôt, "to stay the execution till the re-



turn of the Princess herself? she would have granted you an easy pardon, and your boy's life might have been saved."

"I did, I did," replied the unhappy father; "I did pray — I did beseech — for a day — for an hour; but he would not listen to me. He said that the circumstances of the case would not justify such an action; that the proofs were clear and undoubted; that he — he, my poor luckless boy — had committed an offence heinous in the eyes of God and man; that he had outraged a defenceless woman, and slain a fellow creature to escape from the punishment of the crime he had committed! Oh! may the time come, that he himself may plead for mercy to ears as deaf and inexorable! Mark me, Sir Prévôt, mark me! men say lightly that they would give a right hand for some trifling nothing that they covet in this world — some rare jewel, or some painted hood, or some prancing horse; but I would lay down both these old hands, and bid the hangman strike them off — ay, with a smile — for but one hour of sweet revenge."



“If such be the case,” replied Maillotin du Bac, in his usual common-place tone ——

“If such be the case?” exclaimed the other, starting up with a new and violent burst of passion: “if such be the case? I tell thee it is, man! Why came you here? What do you want with me? Beware how you urge a desperate man! What seek you? What offer you? Do you come to give me revenge? If me no ifs, Sir Prévôt. Come you to give revenge?”

“I do!” replied the Prévôt, who had been waiting till the other had run out his hasty exclamations; “I do, Master Ganay, if you can recover your cool tranquillity, and argue some difficult points with me, with the calm policy with which, I have heard, that you can bend some of your young and inexperienced comrades to your purpose. But recollect yourself — be determined, collected, and politic, and you shall have revenge —— As I am a living man!” he added, seeing the druggist’s eyes fix upon him with a look of stern enquiry.

“Then I am calm!” answered the old man;



“as calm as the dead. I seek but that one thing — revenge! Thou sayest true, Sir Prévôt; I have been moved — far too much moved. — I, who am wont to stir the mind of others, while I keep my own as tranquil as a still lake, I should not have yielded to such mad despair, but should only have thought how I might repay the mighty debts I owe to some below the moon. Pardon me, and forget what you have seen — but you have never lost a child; — you have never seen your only one given to the butchers. But I am calm, as I said, quite calm; and I will be calmer still. Ho, boy! without there!” and raising from the table, he threw open the door, and rang a small silver hand bell which stood beside him; and in answer to the tones of which, the boy who had before presented himself, re-appeared.

“Bring me,” said the druggist, “that small box of the precious juice of the Thebaid, which the Venetian merchants sent me as pure and unadulterated. Let us be silent till it comes,” he added, speaking to the Prévôt; “it will soon



calm all but the settled purpose. I marvel that I thought not of its virtues before."

The boy soon returned, bringing a small box of sanders wood, in which — wrapped in innumerable covers, to preserve its virtues — was a quantity of pure opium, from the mass of which the druggist pinched off a small portion, and swallowed it, much to the surprise of Maillotin du Bac, who held all drugs in sovereign abhorrence. However violent might be his passions, Ganay, by the influence of a powerful mind, had acquired such complete command over them, on all ordinary occurrences, that seldom, if ever, had they overpowered his control in the course of life. On the present occasion, indeed, despair and mental agony had conquered all for a time: but, even before he had swallowed the opium, he had recovered his power; and, speedily, as that great narcotic began to exercise its soothing influence upon the irritated fibres of his corporeal frame, the mind acquired still greater ascendancy, and he felt no little shame and contempt for himself, on account of the



weak burst of frenzied violence to which he had given way in the presence of the Prévôt.

He was too politic, however, when he had recovered, to show that he did condemn the feelings to which he had given way; and he at once prepared to play with Maillotin du Bac the same shrewd and artificial part which he had laid down as the general rule of his behaviour towards mankind.

The two were fairly matched; for the Prévôt was one of those men in whom a sort of natural instinct, as well as the continual habit of observation, leads to the clear perception of other men's motives, especially where they strive to conceal themselves amongst the dark and tortuous paths of policy. He was, certainly, sometimes wrong in his calculations, but was not often so; and, in the present instance, by placing himself exactly in the situation of the druggist, and conceiving what would have been his own feelings under such circumstances, with a little allowance for the difference of character, he arrived at a very correct conclusion, in regard to the designs and the wishes of his com-



panion, as well as to the obstacles which might impede them from acting together.

One great difficulty, indeed, would have lain in his way on almost any other occasion ; for so accustomed was he both to see others attempt to deceive him, and to deceive others himself in return, that he could scarcely deal straight-forwardly with any one. As he was now perfectly sincere, however, in his desire of aiding the druggist's revenge, or rather of accomplishing his own through that of Ganay, he could afford to be candid on the present occasion. All that obstructed their cordial co-operation arose in those doubts and fears of each other, which all villains, however bold, must naturally feel on leaguering themselves together for an evil purpose ; and such jealousies were undoubtedly felt strongly by the Prévôt and his companion.

Nevertheless, these difficulties were to be got over. The doubts and suspicions were soon very frankly avowed ; for as each — though with certain modifications — considered cunning or shrewdness as the height of human wisdom, and, consequently, of human virtue, vanity itself



naturally taught them to display rather than to conceal the prudent circumspection, with which they guarded against any danger from each other.

We cannot here detail the whole conversation that ensued ; but, in the first instance, the druggist made himself master of all the circumstances which acted as incentives to revenge, in the mind of Maillotin du Bac, against the Lord of Imbercourt, before he committed himself further. By many a keen question, he induced him to unveil, step by step, the manner in which, through many years, that nobleman had thwarted his designs, and incurred his displeasure ; how he had cut him off from reward and honour where he had striven for it by dishonourable means ; how he had defended the innocent against his persecution ; how he had sternly overturned many of his best laid schemes, and exposed some of his most subtle contrivances, from a period of many years before, up to the day in which his testimony had freed Albert Maurice from the effects of the Prévôt's vindictive hatred. Had there been



one defect in the chain, — had not the motive for vengeance been clear and evident, — the suspicions of the druggist might have remained unshaken, and he might have conceived that Maillotin du Bac had visited him as a spy, with the design of betraying the schemes of vengeance which his incautious indignation might breathe, to the ears of those who had refused mercy to his child. But the Prévôt, appreciating and revering his suspicions, recapitulated every event with cool, bitter exactness, and dwelt upon the various circumstances with a precision that showed how deeply they were impressed upon his memory. He added, too, a slight glimpse of interested motives, by showing how Imbercourt had stood in the way of his advancement, and how he might be profited in his own office, if that nobleman were removed, by any means, from the councils of Burgundy.

The impression thus left upon the mind of the burgher — and it was a correct one — was, that there was a long store of treasured hatred in the mind of the Prévôt towards this states-



man, Imbercourt, aggravated by thwarted ambition and avarice; and that he had reached that point at which he was ready to run considerable risks for the gratification of his vengeance and the promotion of his interest. As to any moral sentiment standing in the way, it was an objection which neither the Prévôt nor the druggist ever dreamed of. Those were ties from which each felt that the other was free, and therefore they were never taken into consideration.

After a long conversation had brought them to this mutual state of good understanding; and after the druggist had pretty plainly pointed out that, before proceeding with any of the deeper and more intricate schemes, which might place the life of each in the power of the other, he should expect that the Prévôt would join with him in some act which, though less dangerous, would give him a hold upon that officer, which at present he did not possess, he went on with the calmness of intense but subdued feelings.

“By the sentence of the Eschevins,” he said, in a low, quiet tone, which was, perhaps,



more impressive than even his former bursts of passion ; “ by the sentence of the Eschevins, Sir Prévôt, the body — you understand me — the body is to hang in chains over the Ypres gate, till such time as it is consumed by the wind, and the rain, and the foul birds of prey ; — will it not be sweet for a father’s eyes to behold such a sight every time that he rides forth from his own house ? ”

“ Why, truly no, Master Ganay,” replied Maillotin du Bac : “ good faith, you must take some other road.”

“ Ay ; but would it not be a matter of triumph, rather than shame,” replied the druggist, “ if I could ride through that gate, and find the body gone ? In a word, would it not be proud to show these paltry tyrants that even now they cannot work *all* their will ? — What ! do you not understand me yet ? I would have my son’s head laid in the calm ground, man : I would have the body of the thing I loved removed from the place of horror and of shame. — What say you ? — can it be done ?



"I understand you now," replied the Prévôt: "let me but think a moment, Master Ganay, — let me but think a moment. It can be done — ay, it can be done: but I should think it mattered little to one of your firm mind. The body will rot as soon in the holiest ground that ever priest or bishop blest, as in the wide unholy air."

"Do I not know that?" demanded Ganay, with a curling lip. "Think you that I ever dream of angels or devils, or all the absurd fancies that monks and priestly quacks have built up, on the wild vision of an hereafter? — No, no! but I would fain disappoint the tyrants, and teach them that they cannot do all. I would fain, too, remove the memento of my house's shame from before the eyes of my fellow-citizens. — Can it be done, I say?"

"It can — it can!" replied Maillotin du Bac: "and, to please you, it shall be done. Hie you away straight to the churchyard of the Minnims, with some one you can trust bearing pickaxe and shovel. Use my name, and the porter will soon let you in. Wait



there till I come, and busy the man you take with you in digging a trench. Be quick; for it will take long. I go upon *my* errand; and will be there in about two hours. After this, Master Ganay, I think we may trust each other. So we will meet again to-morrow night, at this hour; and, if I mistake not, we will soon find means to crush the viper that has stung us both."

The druggist replied not a word, but wrung the hand that the Prévôt had given him hard in his own, and suffered him to depart.

It were needless to trace further the proceedings of that night, or to give any more detailed explanations in regard to the events just mentioned, than to say, that early the following morning a party of children and women assembled before the Ypres gate, to gaze, — with that fondness for strange and fearful sights which often characterises that age and that sex, — upon the body of young Karl Ganay, the rich druggist's son, who, after a short course of wild profligacy and vice, had been hanged for murder the day before. However much they



might expect to have their wonder excited, it was so in a greater degree, though in a different manner from that which they anticipated. There, on the projecting beam from which the unhappy young man had been suspended, hung, indeed, the rope which had terminated his existence, and the chains which marked the additional turpitude of his offence, but the body itself was no longer there ; and the tidings of what had occurred soon spread through the city.

Strict search was immediately instituted. The Eschevins, and other officers appointed by the Duke of Burgundy, were furious at their authority being set at nought, and both held out threats and offered rewards for the discovery of the body ; but it was all in vain : and while some of the more malevolent — remembering the course of young Ganay's life, and into the hands of what Being it had appeared likely to cast him in the end — accounted for the disappearance of his body, by supposing that the great enemy of mankind had carried it off as his due, others, more charitable, but not



less superstitious, chose to believe that the father, by some drugs only known to himself, had found means to resuscitate his son, and had sent him away to some distant land, where his crimes and their punishment were equally unknown.

This version of the affair, indeed, obtained by far the most numerous body of supporters; and the tale, swollen and disfigured by tradition, is still to be heard at the firesides of the citizens of Ghent.



## CHAP. V.

OTHER matters of more general interest occurred soon after the events we have narrated in the last chapter, and imperatively called the attention of the citizens of Ghent from the unhappy druggist and his son. Strange rumours of a battle fought and lost beneath the walls of Nancy circulated in the good town during the evening of the ninth of January. No one, however, could trace them to their source. No messenger had arrived in the city from the army of the Duke of Burgundy ; and the wise and prudent amongst the citizens, after a few enquiries concerning the authority on which these reports rested, rejected them as false and malicious.

They were borne, however, in the evening, by Maillotin du Bac, to the ears of the druggist Ganay : and the chance of such an event was eagerly canvassed between them, as well



as the course of action to be pursued in case the tidings should prove true ; which, as they calculated all the probabilities, and suffered their wishes in some degree to lead their judgments, they gradually persuaded themselves was even more than likely.

Long and anxious were their deliberations ; and it was verging fast towards the hour of three in the morning when the Prévôt left the dwelling of the rich merchant. It was a clear, frosty night, with the bright small stars twinkling in thousands through a sky from which every drop of vapour and moisture seemed frozen away by the intense cold. The world was all asleep ; and the sound of a footfall in the vacant streets was enough to make even the journeyer himself start at the noise his step produced, so still and silent was the whole scene. The sinking moon, though she still silvered over with her light the frost-work on the high roofs of the various buildings, and poured a flood of mellow splendour down the long streets that led to the westward, cast the broad shadows of the principal buildings com-



pletely over all the other parts of the town, leaving no light but that which was diffused through the whole air by the general lightness of the sky, and the glistening whiteness of the ice upon the canals. There is always something sublime and touching in the aspect of a large city sleeping calmly in the moonlight of a clear quiet night, with all its congregated thousands reposing beneath the good Providence of God. But the mind of Maillotin du Bac had reached that point of obduracy at which the sweetest or the most solemn, the most refreshing or the most awful of the pages in Nature's great monitory book are equally unheeded. Wrapping his cloak round him, to guard against the cold, he walked on, close to the houses, and turned into the first small narrow street that he found, in order that no watchful eye, if such existed, might trace him from the house of the druggist. Thence, again deviating into one of those lateral streets that lead along by the side of the principal ones, he continued his course over the stones, rendered black and slippery by the intense frost.



All was still. Not a sound fell upon the ear, but every now and then the distant crowing of a cock heard through the clear air from the country beyond the walls. After a little, however, as the Prévôt walked on, he caught the tramp of a horse's feet sounding afar off, and, in a few minutes, the challenge of the sentries at the Alost gate, the clang of the portcullis, the fall of the drawbridge, a brief murmured conversation at the gate, and then again the sound of the horse's feet advancing at a slow pace — which the state of the pavement rendered necessary — down the principal street. All this he heard clearly and distinctly; for the sound must have been small, indeed, which, in the calm still winter air of the night, did not reach his practised ear.

He was now too far from the house of the druggist for his appearance in the streets, even at that late hour, to lead to any suspicion of their connection, especially as his official duties were always a fair excuse for conduct that in other men might have led to doubt and question. At the same time the very habits of



his life gave him a propensity to investigate every occurrence, however slight, so that the sound of some one entering the city, at such an hour of the night, instantly attracted his attention, and his curiosity at once led him to take a short cut into the street down which the horseman was riding. It was one of those which, running nearly east and west, was still illuminated by the pale light of the moon; and the eye of Maillotin du Bac, which never forgot the form that it had once rested upon, instantly perceived and recognised an armed cavalier riding towards him, whom he had known as a boon companion in the army of the Duke of Burgundy.

His resolution was instantly taken to accost him; and, stepping out of the shadow, as the cavalier approached, he exclaimed, "Why, how now! what news, Paul Verdun? How long have you left the camp?"

"Who the devil art thou?" was the first reply of the cavalier, who appeared to have drank fully more wine than was beneficial to his faculties of perception: — "Who the devil



art thou? — What! Master Prévôt? — give you good day — give you good day — night, that is to say: or day it may be, too; for, by my faith, it is after cock-crow. What! going your rounds? — Ever watchful, Master Prévôt, hey? — What news of the good city?”

“Nothing stirring — nothing stirring,” replied Maillotin du Bac: “no news at all, except that the Eschevins hanged a man yesterday, without my help. But what news of the camp, I say; and how came you from it?”

“Ay, there is the mischief,” replied the soldier.

“What! no new defeat?” interrupted Maillotin du Bac, his wish, very likely, being father to the thought.

“Defeat! No, no, — no defeat, man!” replied the soldier: “never were we better. A glorious army — posted strongly, — the town almost reduced by famine, and nothing but a handful of raw Switzers come to relieve it. There will be a battle before many days are over; and Duke Charles will cut up the churls



like mincemeat. But the mischief is, that I should be sent away before it is fought."

"So there has been no battle after all?" replied the Prévôt. — "Well, God send it a good issue, when it does come. — Good night, good friend: I must on upon my way."

"Good night! — good night!" replied the soldier: — "faith, I must on my way too; for I have letters from the Duke, and from the Count de Chimay, for my good Lord of Imbercourt; and, somehow, I met with three good companions at Alost, who wasted my time over their cursed pottle-pots. Good night! — good night!" and so saying, he rode on.

"Ha!" muttered the Prévôt, as he walked onward towards his own dwelling: "so — that scheme is all vain, and we must try the other, though it will be both difficult and dangerous to get any one to give him the dose. I had rather that it had been something public, too, if it had but been to wring his pride." Thus muttering as he went, the Prévôt now trod his way homeward. The soldier and his war-horse were admitted into the court of the Lord of



Imbercourt's hotel. The streets of Ghent resumed their solitude and silence; and the night between the ninth and tenth of January ended in peace.

No small activity was observable, however, the next morning in the precincts of the court. By seven o'clock the Lord of Imbercourt was on horseback, and proceeding towards the palace, at which Margaret Duchess of Burgundy, and sister to Edward King of England, had arrived the day before. The Princess Mary, too, was expected from the side of Bruges. But, nevertheless, two messengers were sent off, at different times, in that direction; and it was supposed that they bore her the intelligence of an approaching battle, and recommended her immediate return to the city.

The news which had been brought by Paul Verdun, and the certainty that, at the time of his departure from the Burgundian camp, no battle had been fought, spread rapidly through the city, and was received by every different individual with different feelings, as he was well or ill affected to the reigning family. The



certainly, however, that an immediate struggle was about to take place between Charles the Bold and his determined and hitherto successful adversaries, the Swiss, of course kept the minds of the people of the city in a state of agitation and excitement,—a state the most detrimental, morally and physically, that it is possible to conceive for any town or any people. Business was neglected, if not suspended ; political gossipings supplied the room of activity and industry ; anxiety, suspicion, and irritation took the place of calm labour and tranquil enjoyment ; the slightest piece of news, whether false or true, was sought and received as a boon ; the wildest tale found some to believe it ; and a small lie, by the industrious augmentation of many, soon swelled into a mountain of falsehood.

Towards evening the Princess Mary arrived at the palace ; and while the good people of Ghent proceeded to distort amongst themselves the news of her return in every different way that suited their fancies—some saying that she had come back with only a single squire,



some that she had brought with her a force of a thousand men at arms — that fair girl herself, after dismounting in the court-yard, together with exactly the same train that had accompanied her during the whole course of her progress, ran lightly up the wide flight of steps which conducted to the apartments of her amiable stepdame, and in a moment after was in the arms of Margaret of York.

“ Bless thee, my sweet child ! bless thee ! ” said the fair Englishwoman, pressing her husband’s daughter to her bosom : “ thou art come to comfort me ; for I am very sad, and my heart is full of forebodings.”

“ Nay, nay, madam, never fear,” replied the Princess ; “ you are sad and anxious because you know my lord and father is likely to risk a battle, — and I, of course, am anxious too ; but still we must not despond. Remember, madam, how often he has fought and conquered.”

“ It is not for the battle that I fear,” replied Margaret of York : “ my early days, and my early recollections, have been, and are, of nothing but stricken fields, and battles lost and



won; and the tidings of approaching strife would give me no apprehensions, did not those who are on the spot give breath to doubts and suspicions which have sadly shaken my hopes, dear Mary. In a word, with the Duke's letters, received last night, came a despatch to the good Lord of Imbercourt from the Count de Chimay. He speaks vaguely and doubtingly; but he evidently apprehends treasons, and as evidently points to Campo Basso as the traitor, — your father's most trusted and favourite servant."

"I would fain see the letters," replied the Princess: "may I beseech you, madam, to let the Lord of Imbercourt be sent for."

The desire of the Princess was immediately obeyed; and, in a short time, Imbercourt returned to the palace. His words were few, and tended merely to express his congratulations on the Princess's safe return, without touching upon the fears which had been more openly spoken by the Duchess of Burgundy. There was, however, that degree of settled gloom upon his countenance, and a restless



anxiety in his eye, which showed that his apprehensions were perhaps greater even than her own. He immediately laid before the Princess Mary the letters which he had received the night before, and which, as far as positive fact went, merely stated that the Burgundian army, in great force, lay in a strong position beneath the walls of Nancy; that a small army of Swiss and Germans were encamped opposite to them, and that a battle was likely soon to take place. The Duke's letter was short and general: that of the Count de Chimay was more particular; and Mary read over both with deep and eager attention.

"There is much to fear," she said, as she laid them down, "in both these despatches. May God defend us, and avert the dangers that threaten!"

"That there is much to fear in the letter of Monsieur de Chimay, I acknowledge, madam," replied the Lord of Imbercourt; "but I see nothing in that of our noble sovereign the Duke which should give us any apprehension."

Mary raised her eyes with a timid glance



towards the face of Margaret of York, as if fearful of giving her pain, or of increasing her alarm. But the Duchess instantly perceived the cause of her hesitation, and exclaimed, — “Speak, speak, dear Mary! let us not have a thought concealed from each other.”

“Well, then,” replied Mary, the tears starting in her eyes, — “I must say I see more — far more — cause for apprehension in *this* letter than in *this*,” and she laid her hand first upon the letter of her father, and then upon that of the Count de Chimay. “The one,” she proceeded, “speaks vaguely of traitors to be feared in my father’s camp; the other shows me much cause to fear for my father himself. — O, my Lord!” she added, laying her left hand upon the arm of Imbercourt, while, with her right, she pointed to a number of blots and erasures; sentences begun and not finished, or phrases entirely altered in the despatch from her father: — “O, my Lord! do you not see a great alteration here? The time was when the brief, clear sentences of Charles of Burgundy, unstudied and rough though they might



sometimes be, proceeded at once to the point, without change or hesitation, and expressed with force and precision the exact meaning, which was too clear in his mind, ever to be doubtful in his words: but look at that letter, my Lord, — Did you ever see any thing like that from the hand of the Duke before?"

Imbercourt was silent, and gazed upon the paper with a stern and mournful glance.

"My Lord, my Lord!" continued Mary, "my father is ill; and, with Heaven's blessing, I will set out to-morrow to see him and console him."

"Nay, lady," replied Imbercourt, "you must not forget that you are left here by your father, as his representative in Flanders; and indeed you must not quit your post. Before you could arrive, too, a battle will have been fought. I will yet trust that the noble Duke will win it gloriously: and you know him too well to doubt," he added, with a faint smile, "that a battle won will do more to console him, than the sweetest voice that ever whispered comfort in the ear of man."



“I do indeed, — I do indeed!” replied Mary; but no smile accompanied her words; for that truth had been often felt too bitterly during the course of her past life. — “I do indeed; but yet the only thing that can detain me here while my father, ill at ease, and shaken both in body and mind, lies in his weary leaguer before Nancy, is the doubt which is the superior duty — to join him there, or to remain in the situation in which he has placed me.”

“Nay, nay, Mary,” said Margaret of York; “your duty binds you to stay here, and mine calls me hence. You can trust my love for both your father and yourself; and, as soon as may be, I will join him, though haply my coming unbidden, may call on me some harsh words, as when last I saw him at Dijon.”

“Bear with him, dear lady! oh, bear with him!” replied Mary. — “It is but the haste of an impatient spirit chafed by unwonted reverses. He knows the worth of your love too well to chide with any bitterness. But hark!” she proceeded, — “what noise is that in the



court? For God's sake, my Lord of Imbercourt, look out and see! for since I took upon me the sad task of holding the reins, which require a far stronger hand than mine, I have met with so many sorrows and misfortunes, that every sound alarms me. — Hark! there are many people speaking.”

In obedience to her command, Imbercourt approached the casement which opened above the lesser court of the palace, and, throwing back a part of the lattice, he looked out upon what was passing below. The first object that his eyes fell upon was the form of the old Lord of Neufchâtel, in the act of dismounting from his horse by the aid of two stout attendants, whose dusty armour and jaded horses evinced that they, like their master, had travelled far and fast. The old nobleman himself, however, displayed strong traces of battle as well as way-faring. His helmet was off, and its place supplied by a small furred cap, from underneath which a mingled mass of bandages and long gray hair, dabbled with dust and blood, made its appearance; while his left arm, supported



in a torn and soiled scarf, showed that the fight had been severe ere he left it.

Imbercourt at once guessed the event which he had come to communicate; well knowing that an aged and wounded cavalier would not have been chosen as the messenger of victory: and while, with slow and painful efforts, the old lord dismounted, the counsellor withdrew from the window, doubting whether he should meet him on the stairs, and delay the tidings that he bore, till Mary was more prepared to receive them, or whether he should suffer him to see the Princess, and let the shock pass over at once. His course, however, was determined by Mary herself, who marked the conflict in his mind by the changing expression of his countenance.

“What is it, my Lord?” she exclaimed; “speak boldly! — Are they again in revolt?”

“Who, madam? — the men of Ghent?” demanded Imbercourt. — “Oh! no, no! nothing of the kind. It is apparently a wounded officer bearing news from the army; and I fear ——”



Mary waved her hand. — “ Bid him hither ! — quick ! ” she exclaimed. — “ Suspense is worse than any tidings. Quick, my Lord ! Bid him hither, without pause of idle ceremony.”

Imbercourt withdrew to obey ; and while Mary gazed with eager eyes upon the door, Margaret of York fixed her glance with melancholy interest on her fair step-daughter, more anxious for Mary of Burgundy — in whom she had found as much affection as she could have expected from a child of her own bosom — than even for a husband, who had never greatly sought her love, and who had neglected her as soon as he found that she was destined to be childless. But a short time elapsed between the Lord of Imbercourt’s departure and his return ; but moments of apprehension would weigh down many long days of joy : and to Mary of Burgundy his absence seemed interminable. At length, however, he came, followed slowly by the old Lord of Neufchâtel, unable, from wounds, and weariness, and exhaustion, to walk without the support of several attendants.



Even anxiety conquered not the gentleness of Mary's heart; and though she began to exclaim, as he entered, "Well my Lord! Speak!" she instantly paused, and continued, — "Good God! you are sadly wounded, sir. Bring forward that chair; send for the surgeon of the household; sit you down, my Lord of Neufchâtel! How fare you now?"

"Better than many a better man, madam," replied the old knight, more full of the disastrous tidings he bore, than even of his corporeal sufferings; "many a one lies cold that could fill the saddle now-a-days far better than old Thibalt of Neufchâtel."

"Good God! then, what are your tidings?" cried Mary, clasping her hands. "My father? — speak, sir! — my father?"

"Is well, I hope, lady," replied the old soldier; "but as for his army——"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed the Princess; "first, thank God for that! But are you sure, my Lord, that he is safe?"

"Nay, nay, I cannot vouch it, lady," he replied; "his army, however, is no more. Fatal



most fatal has been the Duke's determination. All is lost in the field. The army of Burgundy is, as I have said, no more; and where the Duke is, I cannot say, though I saw him galloping towards the left when I quitted the field, which was not amongst the first. Ah! had he but taken my advice!" he added, with a rueful shake of the head; a slight touch of natural vanity obtruding itself, even then, in the midst of sincere grief of mind, and pain, and exhaustion of body.—"Ah! had he but taken my advice, and not that of either the black traitor, Campo Basso, or of Chimay, and such boys as that! But, lady, I am faint and weary, for I have ridden harder to bear you these news, though they be sad ones, and to bid you prepare all sorts of reinforcements to check the enemy, than ever I thought to ride from a field of battle."

"But tell me, my Lord," said Margaret of York, stepping forward, as Mary, overwhelmed with the tidings, sat gazing, mournfully, in the face of the old soldier, while her mind was afar; "but tell me, my Lord, how all this has



happened. Speak, for I have a right to hear; and my ear, alas! has been, from the cradle, too much accustomed to the details of battle and bloodshed, for my cheek to blanch or my heart to fail. Say, how went this luckless day?"

"Faith, good madam, I must be short with my tale," replied the Lord of Neufchâtel, "for I know not how, but my breath fails me."—"My Lord the Duke—God send him safe to Ghent!—had sworn by all the saints, that no house of stone should ever cover his head till he had slept in Nancy, which, as you know, we had besieged some days. The enemy, in the meanwhile, lay over the water a league or two beyond St. Nicholas, and day by day increased in number, while day by day the forces of the Duke fell off; for we had famine and disease, and—worse than all—traitors in the camp. But his Grace would not be warned, though many a one strove to warn him; and at length, on the Sunday morning, just five days since, the Swiss and Lorrainers, with their German and French allies and Italian traitors, marched boldly up towards our camp. Faith! it was a fair sight to



see them come in two great bodies — one by the river, and the other by the high road from Neufville. Churls though they were, they made a gallant array. So then they came on. But, madam,” he added, rising and supporting himself by the back of the chair, “I love not to think of it! Good sooth, it makes my heart swell too much to tell the whole just now. We were soon hand to hand — the artillery roaring, bolts and arrows and balls flying, the trumpets braying, and the men-at-arms charging gallantly. But still, as I looked round, I saw the ranks of Burgundy wax thin; and still the Swiss churls pushed on; and I saw many a stout soldier fall, and many that had fought well turn his back. Well, as I was thinking what might best be done, my Lord the Duke rode up; and, speaking softly as a woman, he said,—“ My good old friend, I pray you join de Lalaing, and, with your men-at-arms, make one good charge upon the flank of yonder boors. It was soon done and over. We went down like the shot of a mangonel, but we were driven back like the same shot when it



bounds off from a wall of stone. One churl shivered my helmet, and nearly split my skull with his two-handed sword. Another shot me in the arm with his hand-gun. All my poor fellows but two died around me bravely; and they who were left took my horse by the bridle, and were carrying me off, when, by our Lady, I saw one of the base Italians who had betrayed us all, despatching my poor Squire Walter as he lay tumbled from his horse upon a little mound. He had served with me in nine stricken fields, and many a chance affray; he had never quitted me for more than twenty years, so I could not quit him then. No, lady, no! but shaking the bridle from their hands that would have staid me, I turned me round, and struck one more good stroke for Burgundy. But the poor lad was dead! — God have his soul, the poor lad was dead!” and as he spoke, the old knight dashed the tear from his eye with the back of his brown hand.

“Little is there more to tell, madam,” he proceeded, after a moment’s pause. “By this time the battle had changed to a flight and a



pursuit. There were not ten men who held together on the field. Shame to him who turns his back while one hope lasts; but no shame to him who flies from a lost field. I saw the Duke galloping to the left; and as I knew the country well, I spurred for the bridge of La Buissière, and sad it was to see the road all strewed with dead and dying. But when I came near the bridge, the matter was still worse; for there was that foul traitor, Campo \* Basso, with a barricade of carts and wagons, cutting off the fugitives from his betrayed master's host. When I looked forward, there were the Italian devils — when I looked behind, down were coming the German swine; on the one hand was the hill, with the Swiss pikes gleaming over the top, and on the other was the river. The water afforded the only chance; so in we plunged. Our horses were strong and

\* This fact is undoubted, and indeed the whole account of the battle of Nancy here given is confirmed by Jean Molinet, Historiographer to Mary of Burgundy. The writer of this book, however, would have omitted this narration of events, which have been so admirably detailed elsewhere, had it not been absolutely necessary to his story.



unwounded, and we struggled through, though many a gallant gentleman sunk close before our eyes. But, lady," he added, once more, as the excitement of detailing the battle passed away, "I am growing faint again, and in good sooth I have little more to tell; therefore, by your Grace's leave, I will retire."

Mary answered not a word, but gazed upon the old man with the same fixed painful glance; but the Duchess bowed her head, and the Lord of Neufchâtel, with the aid of his two attendants, moved towards the door. Before he reached it, however, he paused, and turning round exclaimed — "Faith! I had forgot the very errand which made me make such haste; for I have travelled with scarcely an hour's rest, in order to bid you take instant measures to secure the country, for that wild young wolf of Lorraine will be upon the frontier speedily; and even as I passed by Brussels I heard strange tales of movements in France. You, my Lord of Imbercourt, look to it with all speed; for, believe me, not an hour is to be lost."

Thus saying, he turned and left the chamber,



while Imbercourt advanced to the Princess, and besought her to be comforted. She answered nothing, however; and only by a melancholy wave of the hand, expressed how deep were her apprehensions.

“Nay, Mary, my sweet child,” said the Duchess, “give not way to despair: remember there is a God of mercy above us, who sees all, and rules all, for the best.”

Mary of Burgundy cast her fair arms round her step-mother, and exclaiming, “My father! Oh, my father!” burst into a passionate flood of tears.”

“Leave us, my Lord of Imbercourt,” said the Duchess. “Let me beseech you to take all the measures necessary for our security; and send out messengers to gain more intelligence of this sad defeat. Call those whom you can best trust to council; and, for God’s sake, suffer not your mind to be overcome at the moment that all its energies are most required.”

Imbercourt bowed and withdrew: but there were circumstances in the situation of the country which rendered it impossible for him to

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act or think with that calm tranquillity which he had displayed at other times. A deep and heavy gloom fell over him from the first moment that the loss of the fatal battle of Nancy met his ear; and he never seemed wholly to recover his former energies.

He took care, however, to summon to the side of the Princess, in her hour of need, all those who, he thought, might best give her both consolation and support. Messengers were instantly despatched to the Lord of Ravestein, the Duke of Cleves, the Bishop of Liege, and several others, whose relationship to the house of Burgundy afforded the best security for their taking an interest in its fate; and Imbercourt endeavoured, as far as possible, to increase the military force within the town of Ghent, without exciting the watchful jealousy of the inhabitants: but the country was totally drained of men, and few, if any, could be added at a short notice to the force within the town — at least, few of those feudal troops on which alone reliance could be placed.

In the mean-while, during the evening and



the early part of the night which followed the arrival of the Lord of Neufchâtel, post after post came in from the side of Alost and Brussels, bringing new details and rumours of the battle; and each additional fact proved it to have been more disastrous and bloody than it had appeared at first. Nothing was heard but long lists of the dead, or exaggerated computations of the total loss. Still, there was a deep silence in regard to the Duke himself. No one knew what had befallen him in the fight or the pursuit; and no one ventured to assert, what all internally believed, that he had fallen upon that bloody plain. The very silence, however, was ominous; and the whole of the inmates of the ducal dwelling in Ghent passed the night in that gloomy apprehension, which is perhaps more racking to the heart than absolute sorrow.

Mary wept her father as dead; but yet she insisted upon hearing the tidings that every post brought in, with that anxious eagerness which showed that a spark of hope, however faint, still remained alive within her bosom; but



with her, and indeed with every one else, as fresh news arrived, as the accounts of the stern determination evinced by the Duke before the battle were multiplied, and as his often reiterated declaration that he would never quit the field alive, was repeated, the conviction of his death became more and more complete.

In the mean-while, the people of the city, collecting in eager and anxious crowds in the streets, especially towards the Brussels gate, canvassed in low tones the events that had taken place. As one horseman after another entered the town, still some individual would start out to accost him, and running by his side as he rode on, would gather from him whatever information he would afford, and then return to tell it to the groups, whose comments on the past were seldom unconnected with some of those whispered apprehensions for the future, which, like the low moanings of the rising wind, generally give notice of a coming storm long before it is ready to fall upon the earth.



## CHAP. VI.

It was remarked as an extraordinary fact, that during the whole course of that evening, — an evening of the greatest excitement and anxiety, perhaps, that Ghent had ever known,—not one of the principal and most influential citizens was seen in the streets of the city. The groups which collected were altogether of the lower classes; and those amongst them, who were supposed to be the most knowing in the policy of the higher burghers, could discover no other sign of interest and anxiety on their part, than was afforded by the sight of one of the serving men of Albert Maurice calling rapidly at the houses of five or six of the principal merchants, amongst whom the druggist Ganay was the first.

Gradually, as the evening closed in, the crowds began to disperse — a considerable number returning home early, to discuss with their wives



and families the news they had collected in the town, and to acquire that degree of domestic importance which a budget of strange tidings is always sure to impart to the bearer. One after another, the diminishing groups thus separated at length — the intense cold driving even the most persevering to the shelter of their own homes, as the night advanced; — and only one or two idle young men, who could boast some acquaintance with the soldiers on guard at the Brussels gate, remained after nine o'clock within the warm refuge of the guard-house, waiting for any tidings that might still arrive.

The many varied scenes, the continued presence of danger, the frequent breaking short of ties and affections, have all a natural tendency to render the heart of an old soldier, in some degree, callous and indifferent to events which agitate and affect younger and fresher minded men. It was wonderful to hear with what calm composure the veterans in the guard-house talked over the events which had spread grief and dismay through the palace, and excitement and alarm in the city. Although they all loved

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and admired the character of Charles the Bold, for the very lion-hearted qualities which had led him to attempt impossible enterprises, and to rush upon certain defeat; yet they canvassed his conduct with calm and somewhat contemptuous examination, and spoke of his probable death in the same terms that they might be supposed to use in talking of a hound which had been gored by the boar.

“Why the devil did he set down before Nancy, in the middle of winter?” cried one; “he might have known very well that nobody would stay with him, looking at stone walls, in a frost like this.”

“Ay, ay, but he did worse than that!” replied another: “why did he trust to a set of Italian hirelings, when he had good subjects of his own?”

“Why, old lions,” rejoined a third, “will, they say, grow both suspicious and obstinate.”

“Full time, then, that they should get their throats cut,” answered the first: “but I know old Charlie well; and I will bet a flag-on of Beaune to a flask of sour Rhenish,



that he never left the field of Nancy. No, no; he had had enough of running away; and sure I am that he died like a stag at bay. Well, I am almost sorry that I was not with him, though a warm guard-house and a pottle-pot are better, at any time, in a frosty night, than the cold ground and a bloody night-cap. Hie thee over, Bon-temps, to the vintner's at the corner, and fill the flagon with the best thou canst get for that broad piece. By my faith! we will have a carouse to the old Lion of Burgundy, be he living or dead, and then we will go sleep. — Hie thee over, while I undo the gate, for there is some one blowing his horn, — a new post from Alost, bringing more news, I warrant.”

While one soldier, according to the request of the other, ran across the street to seek matter for the potations with which they proposed to conclude the night, his senior proceeded to the gate, where, the portcullis being raised, and the drawbridge let down, a cavalier immediately rode in, whom he addressed with, — “ Ha! Master Prévôt; you can never



have gone as far as Alost since you rode out."

"By my faith! I have, though," replied Mailotin du Bac; "look at my beast, — he is steaming like a quagmire with hard riding."

"Well, what news? — what news?" cried the other, — "you must have heard some tidings."

"Nothing new at all," replied the Prévôt: "all is stale as a miser's cheese; — a battle fought and lost; men dead, but not buried; the army dispersed, and every one gone God knows where. — Good night, good night!" and so saying, he rode on. But it is remarkable, that though his horse was evidently ready to drop with fatigue, he did not, at first, take his way towards his own dwelling, but directed his course towards the house of the little druggist Ganay.

In the mean time the soldiers in the guard-house discussed the contents of the flagon, with which their messenger returned; sharing it liberally with the two or three young artisans whom they had permitted to remain at their post. With what had been drunk before, the contents



of the gallon pot which was now brought over was sufficient — notwithstanding the fact of its being shared with the citizens — to obfuscate, in some degree, the intellects of the soldiery ; and, after having given their civil companions a somewhat unceremonious notice to go home, they cast themselves down upon the straw which was provided for their accommodation during the night, and soon forgot every thing else, under the influence of the drowsy god. The sentry without, who had been ordered to watch well, of course felt a greater inclination to sleep than ordinary, which was increased by the cold ; and, in spite of various vigorous efforts to keep himself awake, by walking rapidly up and down, dropping the end of his partizan upon the ground, and several other little experiments of the same kind, he found himself, from time to time, nodding most refreshingly under the shelter of the high arch which spanned over the gate.

How long this state of things had continued none of the soldiers knew, when suddenly the sentry was woke by his weapon being snatched



hastily from his hands; and, on shaking off the slumber which oppressed him, he found himself pinioned by a number of powerful men, while a stern voice, backed by a naked sword at his throat, commanded him to be silent on pain of death. Faithful, in this instance at least to his duty, without a moment's consideration, the soldier shouted loudly, — "To arms! to arms!" But he was instantly thrown down and tied by those who held him, while a number of others made their way into the guard-house. The soldiers there were already upon their feet; and the captain of the watch was starting forward to light the match of his arquebuse at the lantern which hung against the wall, when a powerful man, rushing in, closed with him, and, throwing him violently back, interposed between him and the light. A dozen more persons, completely armed, poured into the building; and more than one stern voice commanded the four soldiers which it contained to lay down their arms at once.

"Who, in the fiend's name, are ye, my masters?" exclaimed the captain of the watch:



"let us hear that, before we put down our arms, at all events:" and while he spoke he made impatient signs to one of his companions to get out of the small window, and give the alarm: but this scheme was frustrated by the same tall, powerful figure which had before prevented him from lighting his match.

"We are the officers of the burgher guard of Ghent," replied the stranger, "whose incontestable right and privilege it has been, in all ages, to mount guard on the walls and at the gate of our own city; which privilege, though it was usurped from us by the Duke Charles, is no less valid than before that act. Give up your arms, then, quietly, and no harm shall befall you."

"Before we do that, good sir," replied the captain of the watch, "we must have authority from our superior officers. As you well know, the commander for the night is at the Ypres gate; send to him, and we will obey his commands."

"You seek, sir, to gain time," replied the other; "but it is in vain. The walls and the



gates are now in our hands. Our sentinels are mounted every where; and each military post which had been unlawfully placed by the Duke of Burgundy, throughout the city of Ghent, has been disarmed before we came hither. Yield, therefore, with a good grace, for yield you must; and as no blood has been shed already, pity it were to begin now."

"Well, sir! — well!" replied the captain of the watch: "you say right in that, at least; though I should be willing enough to shed blood of my own, or of other men, could it prove of service. But four can hardly cope with twenty; therefore, ground your arms, my men, and give them up. We are your prisoners, sir."

"You have done wisely, sokhier," said Albert Maurice, for he it was who spoke; — "take their arms, my friends, but suffer them to pass freely out. As our fellow-citizens arrive, let all the posts be doubled. Now, good Master Ganay," he added in a whisper, "gather together the men we named, and join me quickly at my house. It wants but four hours to daybreak;



and ere the sun rises we have as much to do as would take lazy statesmen full many a month. I go round by the western magazine, to secure, if possible, the stores and artillery. But be quick, for *now* despatch is every thing."

The purpose of Albert Maurice was accomplished without difficulty. The magazine was but scantily guarded ; and the sleeping soldiers were surprised at that post as easily, as the others had been at the guard-houses. The gates, the defences, and all the principal military stations, were now in the hands of the people ; and Albert Maurice hastened home to meet a few individuals, selected from the most influential citizens, on whose consent, and with whose aid, he proposed to assert the ancient privileges of the city of Ghent, as the first step to those grander plans of general emancipation, which yet remained but vague and undefined even in his own mind.

So rapid had been the determination and the movements of the young citizen through all that night — so prompt and successful all his measures — that even Ganay, stirred up by revenge and hatred, and guided by consummate cunning



and shrewdness, had been left far behind. Where he had expected to be obliged to urge and suggest, he found himself at once compelled to follow and obey; and, yielding readily to a mind that he felt to be far superior, he had been hurried through a series of actions in a few hours, which he had contemplated before, indeed, but which he had contemplated as the work of many days, and long and difficult intrigues.

Between ten at night and three in the morning, the young citizen had received, from the druggist himself, the certainty of the Duke of Burgundy's death, as obtained by the Prévôt, had formed his determination at once, had arranged his plans with prompt decision, had assembled the ancient burgher guard in force in his court-yard, by a few brief and striking words had explained to them his views and his schemes, had carried all voices in his favour; and, finally, had seized every military post in the town, except the palace, without bloodshed, while the regular soldiery had every where been surprised and disarmed.



His last effort upon the magazine, the one of the greatest importance, had been effected, as sometimes happens, with more ease, than attempts that had seemed less difficult; and, leaving the citizens, who had accompanied him, to guard that post, he hastened home through the solitary streets, not a little rejoiced to find, by the stillness of the whole city, that the silence and caution which had been enjoined in the first instance was still preserved. No one had arrived when he again crossed the threshold of his own door; and whispering a few hasty orders to the servant who admitted him, in regard to saddling horses, and preparing trustworthy messengers, he entered the chamber where he was about to meet his fellow-citizens, and casting himself back in a chair, covered his eyes with his hand, and abandoned himself, for a moment, to deep thought. More than one pang crossed his heart, as he contemplated the future; but he smothered them instantly: and, banishing regret, he directed the whole powers of his mind to consider the best means for obtaining that object for which he had now irrevocably determined to struggle.



So deep, so intense were the thoughts to which he yielded himself, that Ganay and several others entered the apartment without his perceiving their presence; and it was only the voice of the druggist, demanding if he slept, that roused him from his reverie.

“Sleep!” he exclaimed, starting up; “no, no! Who could sleep on such a night as this? Welcome, my friends, welcome! Each sit down, I pray: others will soon be here; but it is not fitting that of the few hours which are given us for action, even one minute should be wasted in waiting for any man. Some things need long counsel; in others, little can be risked. Let us choose those first that are most easily determined. Citizens of Ghent! are ye not resolved to recover the liberties and privileges which have been torn from you by the unholy hand of power?”

“We are! We are!” replied a number of stern voices around.

“Is it not requisite, then,” continued Albert Maurice, “that you should call your brethren of the other good towns of Flanders and Brabant



to join with and support you, in asserting the rights of all?"

"Beyond all doubt! let it be done!" replied the rest.

"Well, then, by this time," added the young citizen, "four strong horses stand saddled ready to set out; and four trustworthy messengers are prepared to bear to Brussels, Ypres, Bruges, and Louvain, our request that the worthy burghers of those great towns will send us deputies to give force to our proceedings. My letters, written nearly six months ago, when the battle of Morat was lost and won, have prepared them to do so at a moment's warning. The gates are now in our own hands; shall the messengers set out?"

"The sooner they depart the better!" was the universal reply; and a few lines hastily penned to each of the cities, were despatched without farther delay.

Before all this was completed, a number of other citizens had arrived; and the chamber was almost full. Every where were to be seen men with faces pale from anxiety and excitement. Some armed in hasty guise, with such



armour as could be caught up in a moment; some with their night gear scarcely laid aside; and each, as he entered, gazing round upon the rest, with half wild and somewhat fearful glances, as the light of the lamps dazzled their eyes, on entering from the dark streets without. Gradually, however, as they beheld a number of friends and acquaintances all gathered together in the same cause as themselves, the boldness which men derive from union began to spread amongst them. Every one present had long before been prepared, in some degree, for such events as were now taking place; and while they had been taught to look to Albert Maurice as the man from whose voice and conduct the rest of the citizens were likely to take their tone, he had taken care to ascertain the individual sentiments of each one, whom he now called to consult with him, in a moment of such exigency. He well knew, indeed, that it is by no means a necessary result, that the conduct of a large body of men can be judged by, the personal opinions of each. The shades of thought and character in different men are so



infinite, that, when united, as in multitudes, they produce combinations which defy previous calculation: and besides that fact, there is something in the very change of position, from an isolated station to a place in a large body, which alters the characters of the persons themselves. Some, singly bold, are timid in a multitude; and some cowardly as individuals become even rash when supported by numbers.

Albert Maurice trusted to himself, however, to give the impress of his own mind to all the proceedings of the great burghers, and through them to rule the people also: but he well knew that the task before him would be to restrain rather than to excite; for never yet did a country, justly or unjustly, rise against the power that previously ruled it, without going infinitely farther than those who stirred it up originally designed.

As soon as he perceived that all whom he had called were present, the young citizen at once determined to address them, before any one else could interpose to give a wrong direction to their efforts. "Men of Ghent," he said, "may I crave your patience for a moment?



Certain news has just been received by our friend and fellow-citizen here present," — and he pointed to the druggist, — "that in this last and fatal battle, wherein he staked his country's welfare and shed his people's blood in an unjust quarrel, Charles Duke of Burgundy has paid the forfeit of his obstinacy and ambition with his life. Now, men of Ghent, who is there amongst us that does not feel that our rights have been infringed, our privileges usurped, and our liberties trampled on, by him, who has gone to give an account of all the wrongs he has so boldly committed? We all know it, and we all feel it; and there is not an artisan, however humble, in all Ghent — nay, in all Flanders — that is not preparing to take arms to vindicate the freedom of our native land. That freedom, citizens, we may look upon as secure; for never yet did a whole nation join heart and hand in asserting its liberty, but it gained its object against all opposition. But, oh! my friends, let us beware — let us be cautious — let us be wise — let us be just — let us be merciful. Those who would guide a stirred-up



people through a successful insurrection, must be calm as well as bold, and moderate as well as zealous. The wild horses of popular excitement must be governed with a firm and a clear eye, and strong rein, or they will pass far beyond the golden goal of liberty, and rush into bloodshed, anarchy, and licence. We take upon ourselves a great and an awful responsibility; and every drop of unnecessary blood that is shed in this great effort, will cry loudly to Heaven for vengeance on the head of the rash men who caused or suffered it to flow. The sway of all that vast and wealthy land which lately rested in the hand of Charles, called the Bold, has now descended to a young and gentle lady, who, if her counsellors be good——”

“ We will give her good counsellors ! ” cried some one beside him ; but Albert Maurice proceeded — “ Who, if her counsellors be good, will, at our petition, not only restore to us our rights and privileges, but will give us some security that they shall never be infringed again. But let us do nothing harshly. Let



us proceed mildly and legally, though firmly; and first petition, as good and faithful subjects, for the redress of our wrongs, before we proceed to obtain it by our own right hands. Such moderation, my friends, will gain us the love and support of all good men — will prevent neighbouring princes from interfering while we obtain our liberty — and will at once serve best our cause, and satisfy the conscience of the most scrupulous.”

“Methinks, Master Albert Maurice, you have already begun pretty boldly,” said one of the more moderate of the citizens: “I hear that the gates and walls of the city have already been forcibly taken from the Duke’s guard, and the soldiers have been disarmed.”

“That, sir, was done,” replied Albert Maurice, “solely for our own security; and had it not been done, our meeting now, or our petitions hereafter, unsupported by any power of our own, would have been utterly fruitless; — it was done to prevent the Princess from being carried away from us before our liberties were secure; it was done to prevent the intro-



duction of large forces into this town, before we were prepared to bid them defiance; and in doing it, we only asserted and resumed the immemorial right of the citizens of Ghent to guard their own walls and gates,—a right which had been long unjustly usurped.”

“It was wisely done! It was nobly done!” cried a number of voices, in the midst of which Ganay the druggist stepped forward, and said,—“Friends, and fellow-citizens! all here present are bearers of high offices in the several trades, and members of the great commune of Ghent; but we are meeting without form or order. Let us resolve ourselves into a council, as a temporary government of the city; and as president thereof I here propose him, whose able conduct, whose patriotic zeal, and whose prompt activity, has already conducted us, thus far, with triumphant success.”

A murmur of applause followed, which soon rose into a loud and unanimous assent to the proposal. Nor did Albert Maurice affect to decline an office which he had previously determined to assume. His thanks he ex-



pressed with manly eloquence, and assured his fellow-citizens, with the convincing voice of true feeling, that the liberty and prosperity of his native land should ever be the dearest wish of his heart, and the principal object of his endeavours.

As soon as this subject was discussed, an old man, one of the fathers of the city, rose up, and addressed the young citizen. With a slight touch of the monitory garrulity of old age, — at least, most of those who heard him thought it to be such, — he offered a word or two of caution to the young man who had taken upon him so bold and high a part. “He would not,” he said, “urge him to be more moderate in his views, for he seemed to feel the necessity of moderation already; but he would warn him, in the course that was before him, — a course, the turns and circumstances of which, none could yet tell, — to beware of his own passions — to guard against ambition, or revenge, or love: for he was young and ardent; and that heart must be either very cold or very strong, which could resist the influence of some



mighty passion, when under the excitement of great events."

Though Albert Maurice listened with attention, and felt, more deeply than he suffered to appear, the justice of the old man's speech, yet there were others who showed some degree of impatience, and evidently thought it out of season. The old burgher perceived this feeling, and, breaking off quickly, went on with the more immediate matter before them. "It is evident, Master Albert Maurice," he said, "that you have thought over all these events long and deeply, before this night; and, indeed, who is there amongst us who has not so thought? What, then, is the result of your consideration? What is the first step that you advise us to take?"

"This," replied Albert Maurice, — "to meet to-morrow early, at the town-house, and there to prepare a petition, at once condoling with the Princess on the events which have placed the government in her hands, and beseeching her to listen to the voice of her own heart, and spontaneously to restore, to the



good towns of Flanders, those rights and privileges of which her father had deprived them. Especially, let us entreat her, in the first instance, to do away with that false and illegal body of men, which, under her father's jurisdiction, and by his appointment, administered in this city — not justice — but the arbitrary will of the Prince; and to give us back our true and legitimate magistrates, chosen by ourselves, from amongst ourselves, to dispense our own laws to us and to our children."

While the full mellow voice of the young citizen touched so pointedly upon those subjects on which the feelings and passions of the druggist Ganay were so highly excited, the eye of the unhappy father flashed like a living fire, and a small bright red spot gathered in the centre of his sallow cheek, while his lip quivered as if he could scarcely restrain the passion from bursting forth. The moment that Albert Maurice had done speaking, he started up from his seat, and exclaimed in a quick, sharp, discordant voice, which trembled with the very effort that he made to banish from its tones any thing like



personal rancour, — “ I second the proposal. Are we all agreed ? ”

“ We are,” echoed the conclave.

“ Now I,” continued Ganay, “ must offer my proposal too. Listen to me, men of Ghent. Our rights are our own — inherent — unchangeable — which the voice of no despot can wring from us — which his power may hold in abeyance, but which it can never destroy — which, when even suspended, still exist in full force, and render every thing that is done in opposition to them unjust, illegal, criminal : I therefore call upon you solemnly to arraign and to condemn those men, who, chosen from ourselves by the late despot, Charles, became the instruments of his tyranny against their own countrymen. The twenty-six men, falsely calling themselves magistrates of Ghent, — appointed, not by the people of Ghent, according to ancient law and usage, but by the Duke of Burgundy, contrary to all our inclinations and consent, — have, for nearly ten years, presumed to rule and judge, and doom to punishment, and shed blood, within the walls of this city ; for



which, as traitors, oppressors, and murderers, unjustified in their proceedings by any law or right, I claim their death, as the just punishment for their crimes, and a due warning unto others in the time to come."

As he spoke, his whole frame trembled with the angry passion that was burning at his heart. His words flowed rapidly and clear; and his bright dark eyes, flashing from beneath his heavy-knitted brow, offered the very picture of eloquent revenge. A murmur of doubtful import spread through his auditory,—some carried away by his passionate oratory — some unwilling to begin their course with such a sweeping act of severity. Albert Maurice himself,—sympathising deeply with the feelings of the childless father, yet resolved, upon every principle of reason and right, to oppose a proposition which, he well knew, proceeded rather from the spirit of revenge than a sense of justice,—paused between his contending feelings; when, to the surprise of all, good Martin Fruse raised up his portly person, and, with one of those bursts of generous indignation, which sometimes rendered him



almost eloquent, opposed himself strongly to the course suggested by his friend the druggist.

“No, no!” he exclaimed; “no, no! that will never do. Good God! my fellow-citizens, shall it be hereafter said that the people of Ghent rose up powerfully in defence of their own liberties, and made their first act the slaughter of six-and-twenty defenceless men, who had been acting under the belief that they were justified by the law? If any one was to blame, it was the Duke Charles, not they; and good sooth, I doubt, that, at the worst, you could prove that they did not legally hold their posts; for, by my faith! we all consented that the Duke should appoint them, when we thought he was going to hang us all. A cheap bargain we thought it then, when he was at our gates with ten thousand men. But even were it not so, and had we not consented, should we be the first to make widows and orphans in our own city? Should we shed more Flemish blood, when so much has already flowed to no purpose? Should we punish men for actions in which they believed there was no offence? Fie!



lie! Take from them their offices; reprove them for having so far betrayed their country, as to accept the post they held from one who had no right to give it; and let them go back to their dwellings to mourn over their fall. What say you, my fair nephew? do I judge aright?"

"Most wisely, sir, as far as my poor judgment goes," replied Albert Maurice. "None would show more rigorous justice towards men who, perhaps, have been somewhat severe in the discharge of their office, than I would, but that it is clear that the citizens of Ghent formally consented to their nomination by the Duke, and, therefore, that during his life, they were acting at least under legal authority."

"But not after his death!" cried Ganay. "Charles Duke of Burgundy died on the fifth day of this month; and three days after his death my child was butchered by men whose only title to authority had ceased. The cry of blood must and shall be heard; and if it be not ——"

Whatever the druggist added was muttered



in so low a tone, that no one distinguished its import. Albert Maurice, however, saw the necessity of conciliating him; well knowing the influence he possessed over the minds of many whose support was absolutely requisite to success in their undertaking. He now also began to experience how difficult is the task of binding into one mass a large body of men, without any power over them, but that which is afforded by the evanescent bubble, popularity. Revenge, ambition, avarice, vanity, pride, and every other passion common to the sons of man, he knew must ever be fertile sources of disunion in assemblies where, as in that over which he presided, each one feels that his individual adhesion is of too great consequence to the schemes of the rest, for any thing to be refused him, however unreasonable his request. But he had yet to learn that the enchanter's wand, that stilled the very angry seas themselves, would wave in vain over the unbridled passions of mankind.

"Master Ganay,"—replied the young citizen, seeing the impression which had been made



upon a great part of the burghers by the certain fact that the druggist's son had been condemned and executed after the Duke's death, — “the case you mention is one totally distinct from any of the rest, and must be considered and judged of apart. Doubt not you shall have full justice done you; and the day after to-morrow we will assemble in our public hall, and solemnly debate on what course we must pursue in that respect. In the mean while, let us not embarrass our present consultations with any point on which there may be a difference of opinion; — morning will soon be here. Our proceedings, then, are thus far determined: — first, to petition the Princess for restoration of our rights: if she grant them, well; but if by evil counselors she be persuaded to refuse, then to assert them with our blood and with our fortunes, till the last man amongst us perish! Am I right? Well, then,” proceeded Albert Maurice, as a ready assent followed his words, and many of the assembly rose to depart, “to-morrow, by eight in the morning, let us meet in the town-hall; and, in the mean time, friends and fellow-



counsellors of the good city of Ghent, have I not your authority to provide for the guarding and safety of the town?"

"You have! you have!" was the general reply; "and now good night."

One by one the counsellors of the town of Ghent departed from the apartment of the young citizen. But Ganay, the druggist, lingered behind the rest. The conversation between him and Albert Maurice was brief and rapid, but stern and to the point.

"Albert Maurice," said the druggist, "are we still one in purpose?"

"If you so will," replied the young burgher; "but beware that you bring nothing to divide our councils."

"Nay, rather, you beware that you stand not between the sword of justice and its victim," rejoined the other; "for, as I live, if you do, my love for you will become something bitterer than hate; and more than your ruin — the ruin of your cause — shall follow."

The eye of the young citizen flashed fiercely. "Mark me!" he said, grasping the arm of



his companion, and bending his majestic head over him, while he fixed his full stern glance upon the sallow face of the other — “mark me ! It is time that our mutual determination should be spoken : yours has already found voice — now hearken to mine. For the service you may do to the cause that I hold dear, I will give a certain way to your revenge. You see I understand you. But if you take one step beyond that, and show me that you would rule our efforts for your purposes, I will crush you or die. Man, you have met with your master ! and though you may have caused the misery of lordly houses, the star of my destiny is above your scope !”

As Albert Maurice spoke, the cheek of the druggist turned even paler than before ; and he answered in a subdued voice, — “Ha ! indeed ! We do, then, know more of each other than I thought. But this is all vain,” he added, after a momentary pause ; “if you know so much, you know, too, that I love you. But, Albert Maurice, I must—I will have my revenge.”



"You shall have justice," replied the young citizen, "and I will not oppose you; though I think reason, and humanity, and a right construction of the law, should save the unhappy men at whom you aim. The day after to-morrow, however, plead your own cause before the council in the town-hall. I will be absent; and if they judge for you, I will not interpose by word or deed."

The druggist paused, and thought for a moment. "Be it so," he said at length. "They must condemn them: and now for you, Albert Maurice. Mark me! There are two paths open before you. The one, which you seem choosing for yourself, leads to a long struggle between the people and the throne, which, after nicely balancing rights, and weighing tenderly the thousand grains of dust that constitute all questions of government and policy, shall end in nothing for the state, and your own death and ruin. The other, on which I would guide you, conducts, by a few bold strides, to power, to empire, and to *love*! You see I know you, too! Choose for yourself, and let your actions



“speak the result. Farewell ! I will be ever by your side, to prompt you to your own advantage, even to the last moment.”

Thus speaking, the druggist quitted the apartment, and followed the rest of the citizens ; while Albert Maurice remained in the solitude of his own chamber, with his eyes fixed still upon the spot where Ganay had stood. “ To power — to empire — to love ! ” he repeated, in a low tone. “ How dexterously you man knows to mix the small portion of leaven, calculated to turn and change the whole heart of him to whom he speaks. To power — to empire — and to love ! ” and the young burgher cast himself in a seat, and covered his eyes with his hands, as if the very light of the lamps disturbed the intense thoughts that were working in the dark chamber of his bosom. “ No ! ” he cried, at length, clasping his hands together ; “ No ! no ! no ! My country ! thou shalt be my first object ; and if, in serving thee, without one effort for myself, aught of good befall me personally, I will receive it, only as a reward for working thy freedom ; but never shall the thought of my



individual wishes mingle with my aspirations for the benefit of my native land. — Fiend ! how thou hast tempted me !”

He then gave a moment or two to other ideas connected with his situation at this moment ; and the first blossom of that full harvest of regrets, which every man, who sows the Cadmean seeds of civil strife, is destined to reap in bitterness of heart, rose up in his bosom, as he thought of the fate of the unhappy men, whom he felt forced to yield to the revenge of Ganay ; or to resign every hope of delivering his country. It was the first sacrifice of better feeling he had yet been obliged to make ; — but the first is ever the augury of many more ; — and Albert Maurice would fain have persuaded himself that it was not a sacrifice. He strove to prove to his own mind that the men deserved their fate. He called up instances of their severity — of their cruelty ; and recapitulated to his own heart the specious sophistry of Ganay ; asserting that the act they had committed — however just had been their sentence on the druggist’s son — was illegal, from the previous death of him from



whom alone they derived their power. He reasoned, he argued in vain — his heart was unsatisfied; when a neighbouring clock, striking the hour of five, made him start from his seat, and gladly take advantage of its warning voice, to cast away thoughts that brought regret, in the busy activity of preparing the city to hold firmly the power it had assumed.



## CHAP. VII.

WE shall pass over the forenoon of the following day rapidly. The news of her father's death reached Mary of Burgundy early in the morning; and though she wept long and bitterly, her grief was now more calm and tranquil, than it had been while uncertainty remained mingled with sorrow. More agitating tidings, however, had reached the Lord of Imbercourt and the Chancellor Hugonet, at a still earlier hour; for, by daybreak, the first rumours of the disarming of the soldiery, and the seizure of the gates and walls of the city by the burgher guard, had been communicated to them; and before they could take any measures in consequence, the painful fact that every post or defence in Ghent was in the hands of the citizens had been reported from all quarters. Respect for the grief of the Princess caused them to withhold from her, for some hours, the knowledge which they them-



selves possessed of the state of the city; and it was only when, by means of some other private agents, they received information that the principal burghers of the town had assembled in the town-house, and were voting a petition to the Princess, praying a restitution of all those rights and privileges of which they had been deprived by the Duke Charles, that they found it absolutely necessary to communicate to her, both what had occurred and what was likely to follow.

The news affected Mary of Burgundy less than they had expected; and, indeed, proved only a sufficient stimulus to rouse her from the grief into which she had fallen.

"Fear not, my Lord of Imbercourt," she said, as she saw the apprehension that overshadowed his countenance; "fear not, I will soon find means to quiet and satisfy the good people of Ghent. It was only while the will and ordinances of my father were opposed to my own inclinations, that I found any difficulty, or entertained any fear, in regard to the tranquillity of the state."



"I hope, Madam, and I trust," replied Imbercourt, "that you may find it easy; but a stirred-up population is like one of those ravenous beasts, that seems to acquire a greater appetite by feeding largely. I trust that the Lords of Ravestein and Cleves, with others to whom I have despatched messengers, may soon arrive, and in sufficient force to overawe these insolent burghers; so that you may be obliged to grant nothing but that which is just and right, and be able to check concession at the proper point.—Hark, Lady!" he added, as a distant shout burst upon his ear, "the unmanly brutes allow you not one day for sorrow: they are coming even now."

Mary's cheek turned a little pale; but she showed no other sign of apprehension; and merely replied—"Let them come, my Lord; they shall find it difficult to conquer the love of Mary of Burgundy; for love is the only arms that I shall oppose to my subjects. Alas! that they should ever be mine!—I beseech you, my good Lords, to have the hall of audience fittingly prepared to receive the people who seem



approaching fast. Have such guards and attendants drawn up as may give us some show of state. Alice, my sweet friend, seek out the noble Duchess, and pray her to cast by her grief for a moment; for much do I need her presence and support, in what is about to occur."

The orders of the Princess were promptly obeyed. Margaret of York joined her in a few minutes. The hall of audience was prepared as speedily as possible; and every thing was ready for the reception of the burghers before they reached the gates of the palace.

The deputation, consisting of about twenty persons, dressed in their municipal robes, proceeded from the town-house on foot, followed and surrounded by an immense multitude of the lower orders, shouting loudly — "Ghent and liberty! Ghent and liberty! Long live the noble Syndics." They soon arrived at the building called the *Cours du Prince*; and some surprise, perhaps, was felt by the citizens, on finding themselves at once admitted to the palace, without any question, and ushered, through a line of armed guards, to the great hall of audience. The



general impression among them was, that the counsellors of the Princess, possessing a greater armed force than the townsmen had been aware of, were determined to bring the matter to an immediate decision; and, perhaps, even to arrest them in the palace, for the events of the night before. This supposition was rather increased by the appearance of the hall of audience, which was also lined with armed attendants; and by the demeanour of Imbercourt, Hugonet, and other counsellors, who stood with somewhat severe and frowning countenances on each side of the chair of state, which now remained vacant, under the rich crimson canopy that had so often overhung the stern determined features of Charles the Bold.

As soon as they had entered the chamber the deputation paused, uncertain to whom to address themselves. The counsellors neither spoke nor changed their position; and, for a few moments, there was a dead, unpleasant silence, which no one chose to break. At that moment, however, when the dumb confronting of the court and the citizens was becoming even



painful to both, the door by the side of the throne was thrown open by one of the huissiers or door-keepers, and Mary of Burgundy, leaning on the arm of Margaret of York, preceded by some of the officers of the palace, and followed by two or three female attendants, entered the apartment, and advanced towards the chair. She ascended the steps on which it was raised, but did not sit down; and, turning towards the deputation of the burghers, she bowed her head with a gentle inclination, while the novelty of her situation, the feeling that she was taking possession of her dead father's throne, and the difficulty of her circumstances, overcame her firmness for an instant, and she burst into tears.

She wiped the drops rapidly from her eyes, and made a sign to the Chancellor Hugonet, who immediately took a step forward, and said—addressing the deputation of citizens, who still stood at the further end of the room, — “The high and mighty Princess, Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, Countess of Flanders and Hainault, is ready to receive any persons on behalf of her good town of Ghent.”



There was a slight pause; and then Albert Maurice, as president of the provisional council, advanced towards the throne, and knelt on one knee upon the first step. Mary extended her fair hand to him, as he knelt, and with a flushed cheek and quivering lip, the young burgher bent his head over it, while something very like a tear glittered in his eye, too. In his left hand he held a roll of parchment; and, before he rose, he said — “Madam, I come to lay at your feet a humble address of condolence, and petition, from your good and faithful subjects, the citizens of Ghent. Is it your good pleasure that I read it?”

Mary bowed her head; and Albert Maurice, rising from his knee, unrolled the parchment which he held, and read, in gentle and respectful tones, the address which had that morning been agreed to in the town-hall. The terms in which it was couched were as mild and moderate as the young burgher, by his utmost eloquence, had been able to procure. The citizens, in the language of grief and respect, spoke of the high qualities of the late Duke of Burgundy; and



touched, as lightly as possible, upon those acts of arbitrary power and barbarous harshness, which had deprived him of that love, which the more noble and generous parts of his character might have obtained from his subjects. They continued, however, to notice his attacks upon the liberties of the good towns of Flanders, in terms both severe and firm; and they petitioned the Princess immediately to take into consideration the consequences which such aggressions had produced, and to remedy the wrong that had been done by her father.

While Albert Maurice read the petition, the deputation had gradually advanced, and formed a little semi-circle at a few yards' distance from the throne; and when the young citizen had concluded, the Princess immediately replied, addressing herself to all:—

“ I did think, my good friends,” she said, in a tone rather sad than reproachful, “ that the day on which I first heard the sad news of my poor father's death might have been passed in privacy, sanctified to mourning and to sorrow. I know, however, that communities are little



capable of feeling for the griefs and affections of individuals, especially when those individuals are their princes; and, therefore, laying by my sorrow, I come willingly to hear your wants and wishes, and to assure you all, of my firm resolve to do every thing I can, to satisfy and to make you happy. In regard to the rights and privileges of the city of Ghent, far be it from me, now or ever, to enquire why they were restrained or abridged by your late sovereign lord, my father; or to renew old griefs and dissensions, by investigating who was right or wrong in the times past. Me, men of Ghent, ye have never yet offended: ye are my fellow-countrymen, therefore I feel for you; ye are my subjects, therefore I love you. At once, then, whether as a boon, or as a right — whether as your own due, or as a testimony of the affection of Mary of Burgundy — take, hold, and use wisely, all those privileges and immunities whatever, which ye can prove that ye have possessed at any time within fifty years of the present day. Farther back let us not enquire, for it would lead us to times when Ghent and Flanders, under



the usurped domination of a man who was raised from the dregs of the people, by the people's discontent, endured a grosser and more bloody tyranny than ever they suffered from the most savage and cruel of their native princes."

"We thankfully accept your Grace's bounty," replied Albert Maurice; "and without derogating from our own inherent rights, we willingly receive your free and generous confirmation of them, as a grace and benefit conferred; and so humbly take our leave."

"You will confer, my friends," said Mary, "with my Chancellor here present, in regard to all the particulars which you may claim, and will have them clearly established and defined, to the full extent of the words that I have used."

The deputation were then permitted to kiss the hand of the Princess, and withdrew; and Mary, after giving one hasty glance round the hall of audience, retired, once more to indulge her grief in her own apartments.

With her, and with the Duchess of York, the hours passed in lonely mourning, only in-



interrupted from time to time by an occasional call to transact some of the necessary business of the state; or by the tidings of some event which it was thought indispensable to communicate. In the streets and lanes of the city, however, the day went by with all those signs which show an anxious and excited population. Continual crowds collected in various parts of the town; now conversing among themselves, now listening to some popular declaimer. The busy and important were seen hurrying to and fro in every direction. The song, the fiddle, or the *cornemuse*, were exchanged for pitiable verses on the pitiable battle of Nancy; and while one part of the city was over flowing with people, and rang with the sound of many tongues, another showed streets totally deserted, the abode of silence and solitude. At length, towards evening, a strong disposition to riot and tumult displayed itself. Whispers and rumours, originating no one knew where, were spread rapidly amongst the crowd, tending strongly to excite them to outrage. Some said that the council were bringing in large bodies of soldiers;



some that the nobles were arming their attendants, and intended to repossess themselves of the gates. But the strongest and most generally credited reports were directed against the *eschevins*, or police magistrates of the city, whose very duties of investigation and punishment rendered them at all times obnoxious to the lower classes, but who were now hated in a tenfold degree, from the abrogation of the popular form of election in their last appointment. In several districts petty tumults actually took place: whoever bore the appearance of either a noble or a lawyer was insulted as soon as he appeared; and the burgher guard, which was more than once called out, with a very natural leaning to the people from which it was selected, took merely such means of repression as dispersed the crowds in one spot, only to collect in larger numbers in another.

In the mean while, Maillotin du Bac, as *Prévôt*, and the druggist Ganay, as one of the notables of the town, mingled with the crowds, and harangued them with the apparent purpose of persuading them to return peaceably to their



houses. The first, indeed, was any thing but popular in the city; and some supposed that he was exposing himself to outrage by the active part he took; but it was wonderful to see how readily he assumed the tone and deportment necessary to captivate the people, and how speedily the multitude forgot his former conduct. It is true that neither he nor Ganay in their speeches said one word to appease the current of popular indignation, or to divert it from the point to which it was tending. They used every sort of common-place argument to induce the people to return to their own dwellings. They told them that it would be much better, much safer, much more prudent, to disperse, and to let things take their course; though they acknowledged, at the same time, that the eschevins, in the discharge of their illegal office, had acted cruelly and basely. Nevertheless, they said, that those instruments of tyranny would doubtless be brought to justice, if they were not by any means smuggled out of the city. In short, they did what may always be done, excited the people in a far



greater degree, while they affected to tranquillise them ; and pointed their fury to the very object from which they pretended to turn it.

The troops which remained in the town, though totally insufficient to overawe the citizens, or to re-possess themselves of the walls and gates, were numerous enough to hold out, for any length of time, the palace or Cours du Prince, as it was called, which, according to the custom of the day, was strongly fortified ; and which was, luckily, fully provisioned. The attention, therefore, of the ministers of the orphan Princess was solely directed to adding temporary defences to her dwelling, and to repairing any slight defect which time or oversight had produced, without attempting the vain task of putting down the turbulent spirit which was manifesting itself in the city. No hostility, indeed, was evinced by the populace towards the Princess or her attendants ; and servants were suffered to go to and from the palace without the slightest molestation. But still the tidings of tumultuous movements, in various parts of the town, poured in through



the evening; and the distant shouts and cries caught the ear of Mary herself, and more than once made her enquire the cause. Towards nightfall Imbercourt was summoned to her presence; and she asked eagerly if there were no means of pacifying the people?

“None, Madam,” replied the minister; “without, indeed, you could bribe some of their demagogues; and that would, of course, be merely hiring them to create tumults hereafter, whenever they wanted a fresh supply. I am afraid they must be suffered to have their way for a time. In the end the people will see their own folly, and the base selfishness of those that mislead them, and will return to quiet and tranquillity of their own accord. In the meanwhile, thank God, the palace is secure; so be under no apprehensions, Madam, for we could hold it out for six months, against any force they can bring.”

“Oh, I fear not for myself, my Lord,” replied Mary; “I fear for my subjects and my friends. I beseech you, my Lord, leave not the



palace to-night: they might murder you in your way to your own hotel."

"I do not believe, Madam, that they have any ill-will towards me," replied Imbercourt: "I have never done them wrong; and have often stood between them and the anger of their Prince. But my duty commands me to remain here, at least till the town is somewhat more calm; and I certainly shall not quit the palace this night."

So saying, he withdrew; and Mary approached the lattice of the room in which she had been sitting, and which commanded a somewhat extensive view over the city; though the objects that were to be seen were more the roofs of buildings and the spires of churches than the busy multitudes which she would fain have watched, herself unseen. Every now and then, however, a glance was to be caught of some of the manifold canals and squares of Ghent; and Mary threw open the window to see if, ere the light faded away entirely, she could gain a view of any of the crowds whose



shouts she heard. But her effort was in vain; and turning away from the chilling blast of the January wind, she closed the window, and was returning to her seat, when she found that Alice of Imbercourt had followed her to the deep arch in which the casement was situated.

“I wish, dearest lady,” said her fair follower, “that you would take the counsel of a simple girl, which, I have a great belief, would be better than that of all these grave signiors.”

“Well, my Alice,” replied the Princess, with a faint smile, “what would you have me do?”

“May I speak boldly, Lady?” demanded Alice.

“Ay, indeed, as boldly as you will,” said Mary, whose heart wanted some bosom into which to pour its anxieties and sorrows. —

“But first, dear friend, send away those two girls, who sit moping by the fire, sharing my distress without feeling my grief. Bid the page go light the lamps in the other chamber; and tell them to take thither their embroidery frames, and work diligently, while we stay here



in the grey twilight, as dim and melancholy as my thoughts."

Her commands were speedily obeyed. "And now, Alice," she said, as the other returned, "what would you have me do?"

"I would have you despatch a messenger this very night," replied the young lady, boldly, "to the only person to whose arm and to whose heart you could confide to defend and guard you in the present strait — I mean to the Arch——"

"Hush, hush! Not for a universe!" cried Mary. "Good God! what would he deem me? No, Alice, no! you would surely never advise me to such a step. Fie! fie! mention it not!"

"I knew that you would start away, my dearest mistress," replied her fair counsellor; "but you must hear me still. What can you do better? What can you do so well? The circumstances in which you are placed — the difficulties which surround you — do they not justify such an act? do they not render it wise and right, instead of indelicate and bold? The Archduke Maximilian was once plighted to



you by your own father ; and if ever two people loved each other ——”

“Hush, hush ! Alice, I entreat, I command,” interrupted the Princess. “It must not, it cannot be. If such be all your advice, speak no more ; what I wanted was counsel, how to tranquillise these unquiet people of Ghent.”

“I had something to say on that score, too,” replied Alice of Imbercourt ; “but, perchance, my advice will not be more palatable to you, in regard to that matter, than in regard to the other.”

“Nay, nay ; be not offended, Alice,” replied Mary ; “none can judge of that on which you were speaking, but myself ; but, of this business of Ghent, perhaps any one can judge better.”

“Well, then, Madam, I will say my say,” replied Alice ; “and you can follow my counsel or not, as you think best. You saw the young burgher, with the furred robe and the gold chain, who read you the address this morning, —you must remember him — as handsome a youth as ever lady’s eye rested on.”

“I scarcely saw him,” replied the Princess ;



"nor should have noticed him at all, but that I think it was the same who, some three or four months since, was accused before the council of high treason, and acquitted himself most nobly."

"The same, exactly the same," replied Alice: "his name is Albert Maurice, as I hear; and he bears the noblest reputation of any young citizen of them all. I have heard even my own father declare, that yon young man has too high a mind, and too noble a spirit, for his class and station."

"Well, what of him?" demanded the Princess; "I fear me that his noble spirit will work us little good; for, from all I saw to-day, he seems to lead the disaffected of the city."

"You marked him not as I did, Madam," replied Alice: "never mind what I saw, or what I fancied that I saw. He does lead all parties in the city, I hear; and I am fain to think, that had it not been for him, that petition and address, as they call it, would have had a ruder tone. Lady, that young man is well disposed towards you and yours; and I believe



that he might be easily worked upon to use his great influence to cure the present madness of the people."

"Indeed, I believe he is well disposed," replied Mary; "for, I remember, by your father's council, I had him called back after the trial, and besought him, in private, to do his best to maintain peace and order in the city."

"My father's counsel was wise, Madam," replied Alice, with a quiet smile; "and his daughter's is just of the same piece. What I would have you do now, is what my father led you to do then. Send for this Albert Maurice, and beseech him, fairly and gently, to do his best to quiet the populace, and to restore tranquillity. Appeal to his generosity — to his gratitude; — show him how frankly you granted the petition of the citizens this morning; and, take my word, you will make a convert and a powerful friend."

"With all my heart," replied Mary, at once; "but there is no time to be lost: hie thee down to thy father, dear Alice; tell him what I have



resolved to do, and bid him send a messenger for the young citizen directly."

"Nay, nay, dear lady," answered Alica, smiling again; "that way will never do. In the first place, I hear my father is not, just now, the best beloved in the city, for suffering a young man to be executed, who had committed murder, and was condemned by the eschevins; and, besides that, I learned from one of my women but now, that my father had sent, in his own name, to this Albert Maurice and another of the citizens, named Ganay, and that they refused to come."

"Then, most probably, they would refuse me, too," replied the Princess; "and though Mary of Burgundy will do all that she can to make her people happy, she must not stoop to beg their presence, and be refused."

"No fear, no fear, madam," replied Alice; "but leave the matter to me, and I will answer for it, that, ere half an hour be over, the young citizen shall be standing here before you."

"What do you propose to do, then?" demanded the Princess.



“ Merely to write a billet, desiring Master Albert Maurice, in the name of Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, to render himself to the palace, with all speed, in order to speak with his sovereign.”

“ Nay, but it may seem strange,” said the Princess; “ I hardly dare do so without speaking with your father.”

“ If you do, lady,” replied Alice, “ all our scheme fails, or worse may come of it than you suspect. I have already heard the constable of the reiters and one of your Grace’s council regretting that they did not seize upon the deputation this morning, as a pledge for the submission of the people. No, no; he must come in disguise, and must go in disguise. I will send the page with the billet; he is shrewd and active, and shall bring him in by the postern, on the canal. Nay, nay, lady,” she added, seeing Mary about to make some farther opposition, “ I will take it all upon myself. I will write the note and send the page, and bid the sentry give him admission on his return: and if aught is heard of it, it will but pass for the



trick of a mad-headed girl; — and I have more to lose than you, too,” she continued, laughing; “for I have a lover who could be as jealous as a spaniel dog, if I chose to let him.”

The Princess still hesitated, and probably might have refused her consent; but some nearer and louder shouts met her ear, giving evidence that the crowds were increasing as the night came on, and determined her to accede. Alice’s proposal was agreed to accordingly; and, as every moment was apparently adding to the tumult in the city, she proceeded to put it in execution immediately.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE torrent of business in which Albert Maurice found himself involved, occupied his time in such a manner as hardly to permit of his giving much attention to the tumultuous assemblages which took place, during the day, in various parts of the city. Popular leaders, indeed, are apt to attach too little importance to those commotions which, being frequently raised by themselves with ease and rapidity, they fancy they can allay with the same facility and power. Towards two o'clock the young citizen had addressed the people in the market-place, and had easily induced them to disperse, by informing them that the Princess had most generously granted them, of her own accord, all that they could desire. He had then — in the belief that all the other crowds would melt away, in the same manner, before night — retired to his own dwelling; and in the most remote and noiseless



apartment which it contained had proceeded to make, with rapidity and decision, all those arrangements on which depended the defence of the city against external enemies, and the predominance of the popular party within its walls, He wrote instantly to all the municipal councils of the various towns in Flanders; he took measures for organising a considerable national force; he sent express orders to all the gates, to refuse admission to any party of armed men; and he issued orders for the fabrication of arms as speedily as possible, in order that the citizens might be in a state of preparation, in case the privileges and liberty they had regained should be menaced from without.

Thus passed the three hours of light that remained after his return home; and busy hours they were. At length feeling himself, notwithstanding his great corporeal powers, somewhat wearied with the immense exertions which he had made, he proceeded into the garden attached to his dwelling, which formed a little terrace on the banks of the Lys. As he stood there, turning his aching brow to the cool



wind, the full roar of the tumult in the city burst upon his ear; and, after listening for a few moments to the combination of discordant sounds, which rose up from the many streets and squares, he saw at once that some great change had taken place in the popular mind since he had left the great market-place; and, turning quickly back, he prepared to go forth and use all the power he knew that he possessed to restore tranquillity. At his own door, however, he was met by a boy, who instantly pronounced his name, and demanded to speak with him.

"Who, and what are you, boy?" demanded the young citizen.

"I bear you a billet from a lady," replied the youth; "and you must read it directly."

"A billet from a lady!" cried Albert Maurice, with a sneer, curling his handsome lip, "go, go, my boy, this is no time for idle gallantries. Give me the note, and get thee hence, I will read it to-morrow."

"Nay, but you must read it this moment," the other replied, without giving him the note: "ay, and that in private too," he added. "So



come, good sir, go back into your house,—and take it with reverence and care, for it deserves no less.”

“Thou art bold enough,” replied Albert Maurice; but at the same time there was something in the deportment of the boy so unlike that of the common *Love’s messengers* of those days, that he yielded to his desire; and, turning back into the house, strode quickly to the chamber in which he had been writing, and in which a light was still burning.

The moment he had entered, the apparel of the page, and a small St. Andrew’s cross, embroidered on his left breast, at once showed him that he was a servant of the house of Burgundy. Instantly closing the door, Albert Maurice took the note with every sign of reverence and respect, and read it over attentively by the light of the lamp. As he did so, however, his cheek flushed, and then turned pale and flushed again, and he demanded eagerly, “Who gave you this note, Sir Page?”—“The Lady Alice of Imbercourt,” replied the boy; “and she bade



me lead you speedily to the postern on the river."

Albert Maurice paused, and mused; and though no heart that ever beat in a human bosom knew less of fear than his, yet the ordinary calculation of danger which every one makes when engaged in enterprises of importance forced itself upon his notice, and he could not but feel that the step proposed to him was replete with peril. Was it probable, he asked himself, that the Princess should send to him at that hour? And was not the note he held in his hand much more likely to be part of a scheme framed by the Prévôt or some of the inferior agents of the government, in order to get the chief leader of the popular party—the president of the provisional council—into their hands, as a tie upon the people?

Yet, as he gazed upon the billet, it was evidently a woman's writing; and as he re-read the contents there was something in it all, which put prudence and caution to flight at once. Was not the very name of Mary of Burgundy enough? To be requested by her to visit her dwelling in



secrecy and disguise! — to see her, to speak with her in private! — to bask in the light of those beautiful eyes! — to hear that soft and thrilling voice! — the very hope was worth all the perils that ever knight or paladin encountered, and his re-perusal of the billet determined him at once to go. Where to find some speedy means of disguising his person was his next thought; but then, immediately remembering the grey monk's gown in which he had already travelled so far, and which, by some accident, had been left behind by his former guide, he instantly sought it out, — stripped off the furred robe which he had worn through the day, — and buckling on a sword and poniard under the frock, strode on after the page with that increased feeling of security which we all experience when we know that we have the means about us of selling our lives dearly, happen what will in the course before us.

“Better follow at a short distance behind, good father,” said the boy, as they proceeded into the street; “you know your way towards the back of the Cours du Prince. If we go



separate we shall the better escape notice, and you will find me on the narrow path beneath the walls."

As he spoke thus, he darted away, and Albert Maurice followed with the hurried step of excitement and expectation. It was now completely dark; and passing onward along the quay of the canals, and through one or two of the many large squares of Ghent, he soon saw enough of popular feeling to make him hurry his steps, anxious to resume a garb in which he might take measures for repressing the turbulent spirit that was every moment gaining ground. At the corner of each of the larger streets immense bonfires, blazing and crackling in the frosty air, at once lighted, and warmed, and excited, the multitudes that assembled round them. But this was not all; wine and ale too, that genuine Flemish beverage, were circulating rapidly amongst the crowds of men and women, whose class and appearance did not at all warrant the supposition that their own means could procure, even on an extraordinary occasion, such copious supplies of dear and intoxicating



liquors. All this excited a suspicion in the mind of Albert Maurice, that some unseen agency was at work, to rouse the people to a far higher pitch than he wished or expected; and at the same time, he felt that such scenes of tumultuous rejoicing on the news of the loss of a great battle, and the death of their bold and chivalrous sovereign, was indecent in itself, and must be bitter indeed to the child of the dead prince. Such sights, of course, increased his speed; and hastening on as fast as possible, he soon found himself upon the narrow ledge of land between the fortified wall of the palace and the river. But he was alone — the page was nowhere to be seen, and Albert Maurice began to suspect he had been deceived; but, a moment after, the appearance of the boy, hurrying up as fast as his less powerful limbs permitted, soon showed him that his own anxious haste had outstripped even the page's youthful activity.

Although a sentry paraded the wall above, with his slow match lighted, no challenge was given; and three sharp taps upon the postern door soon caused it to fly open, and admit them



within the walls of the building. An inferior officer of the guard stood by, and held a lantern to the face of the page as he entered. The boy endured his scrutiny quietly; but, to the surprise of the young citizen, he found that the appearance of the page was received as a passport for himself. The officer withdrew the lantern without farther comment, as soon he had satisfied himself of the boy's identity, and suffered Albert Maurice and his conductor to enter the palace.

Up long and manifold staircases, through innumerable doors and interminable passages, the page led the leader of the Gandois, and only stopped at length, when both were out of breath, at a small, deep doorway where he knocked before he entered, making a sign to Albert Maurice to pause. The boy was then told to come in, and remained within for some minutes, while the young burgher continued in the dark passage — his heart beating with that thrill of expectation, as he thought of his near meeting with Mary of Burgundy, which would seem to partake of the nature of fear, were it not



almost always mingled in some way with feelings not only of hope, but of joy.

After a time the boy returned ; and, leading the young burgher to another door, threw it open, and admitted him into an apartment fitted up with all the ostentatious splendour for which Charles of Burgundy had been famous in the decoration of his palaces. It seemed to have been a room peculiarly allotted to that Prince's leisure moments ; for all around hung various implements of sylvan sport, each ornamented in some way with the arms of Burgundy, and piled up against the walls in the manner of trophies.

There is something strangely solemn in entering the chamber of one lately dead. It seems more empty — more vacant and cold than when its master, though absent, is living. It appeals to our own feelings and connects itself — by the thin gossamer threads of selfishness which the human heart draws between our own fate and every external event that befalls our fellow-men — with an after-period, when our chamber shall be left thus cold and lonely, and



our place be no longer found amongst the living.

All spoke of the last Duke Charles, and of the bold rude sports of which he had been fond. Even the sconce that held a few lighted tapers, was fashioned in the shape of a boar's head; and as the young citizen entered the chamber he felt that feeling of pity for, and sympathy with, the deceased Prince which nothing could have inspired but his death — that common fate which breaks down all that holds man from man, and first makes us feel our near kindred to each other.

There was no one in the chamber; and the page, after telling Albert Maurice that the lady would be with him in a moment, retired and left him to think both of the living and the dead. His thoughts of the latter, however, soon ceased; for in this active life the solemn impressions are naturally the most transitory; and the expectation of meeting Mary of Burgundy soon absorbed the whole. He had no time to analyse his feelings, or to examine with microscopic accuracy the workings of his own heart. Since



the day he had first seen her in the market-place her image had become connected with almost every thought that had passed through his mind. The name of the Princess, and her conduct in all the events of the day, of course formed a constant part in the conversation of the people; and whenever she was mentioned, the fair form and the mild liquid eye rose to the sight of the young burgher; and the sweet melodious tones of her voice seemed to warble in his ear. He had refused to suffer his own mind to enquire what was going on in his bosom; but the words of Ganay had perhaps, in some degree, opened his eyes to his own feelings, and the sensations which he experienced while waiting her coming in that chamber tended still more to undeceive him. "What, what was he doing?" he asked himself: encouraging a passion for an object beyond his reach. But even while he so thought, a thousand wild and whirling images rushed across his brain — of triumph, and success, and love. But how was it all to be obtained? — by overthrowing her power to raise himself into her rank, — by overturning the in-



stitutions of his country, — by risking the effusion of oceans of blood, and by inducing months of anarchy? — Still this was the only means by which he could ever hope to win the hand of Mary of Burgundy; and he asked himself, would such means win her love? — even were he to give way to the towering ambition which was the only passion that had hitherto struggled with patriotism in his bosom, would it obtain the gratification of that love which was now rising up, a stronger passion, still, destined to use the two others as its mere slaves?

Such feelings as I have said rushed rapidly through his brain, while expectation mingled with the rest, and made his heart beat till it almost caused him to gasp for breath. These sensations were becoming almost intolerable, when the door opened, and Mary of Burgundy, followed a step behind by Alice of Imbercourt, entered the apartment, and the door was closed. The Princess was still pale with grief; but there was a fitful colour came and went in her cheek that was far lovelier than the most rosy health. Her eyes, too, bore the traces of



tears; but their heaviness had something touching in it, which, perhaps, went more directly to the heart than their brighter light.

With a flushed cheek and agitated frame the young burgher advanced a step, and made a profound inclination of the head as Mary entered, not well knowing whether, when received in so private a manner, to kneel or not; but Mary, after pausing a moment, with a doubtful glance, as her eye fell upon the monk's frock with which he was covered, held out her hand for him to kiss as her subject, a custom then common to almost all ladies of sovereign station, and the young citizen at once bent one knee, and touched that fair hand, with a lip that quivered like that of a frightened child. He then rose, and, stepping back, waited for Mary to express her commands, though his eye from time to time was raised for a single instant to her face, as if he thought to impress those fair features still more deeply on the tablet of his heart.

"I thank you, sir, for coming so speedily," said the Princess; "for, in truth, I have much need of your council and assistance."



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companion, and bending his majestic  
 over him, while he fixed his full view  
 upon the sorrowful face of the other—  
 "Work me! It is time that our mutual discus-  
 sion should be spoken: yours has already  
 borne fruit—now hearken to mine. For the  
 you may do to the cause that I hold  
 will give a certain way to your progress.  
 I understand you. But if you take  
 beyond that, and show me that you  
 are our efforts for your purposes, I will  
 be at your side. Now, you have not will-  
 ingly and though you may have caused  
 many a heavy loss, the one at my  
 elbow your hope?"

But Maurice spoke the words of the  
 small eyes pale than before, and he  
 was a natural man.—"What I intended  
 was, have some of our children  
 the day is  
 every year  
 the  
 I am



"I trust, madam, you could not entertain a doubt of my instant obedience to your commands," replied Albert Maurice, finding that she paused.

"The only thing which could have led me to do so," replied the Princess, "was your refusal to come at the bidding of my faithful friends, the lords of Imbercourt and Hugonet."

"There is some great mistake, madam," replied the young citizen, in surprise; "the noblemen to whom your Grace refers have never signified any wish to see me. Had they done so, I should have come at their request with the same confidence that I have obeyed your commands."

"Alice," said the Princess, turning to her fair attendant, "my information came from you; I hope it was correct."

"All I can say, fair sir," said Alice of Imbercourt, advancing a step, and applying to the young burgher the term that was generally used in that day, from noble to noble, — "all I can say, fair sir, is, that I heard my father, the lord of Imbercourt, despatch a messenger this



day, at about four of the clock, to entreat Master Albert Maurice and Master Walter Ganay to visit him at the palace immediately. And I heard, scarcely an hour ago, by the report of one of my women, that a direct refusal had been returned."

"Not by me, lady, certainly not by me," replied Albert Maurice. "Since the hour of two, this day, I have been in my own cabinet busily engaged in writing, and know but little of what has passed in the city. But certainly no messenger has ever reached me to-day from the palace, except the page who brought me the command, which I am here to obey. But you say another name was coupled with mine. Perhaps that person may have returned the uncourteous refusal of which you speak."

"I am very sorry for it, then," answered Mary of Burgundy; "for the matter on which I desired to see you, sir, would be much better transacted with men and statesmen than with a weak woman like myself."

"Your pardon, madam!" replied Albert Maurice. "If what you would say refers to the



city of Ghent and its present state, much more may be done by your own commands, expressed personally to myself, than by an oration of the wisest minister that ever yet was born. Statesmen, madam, are often too cold, too prudent, too cautious, to deal with the frank multitude, whose actions are all passion, and whose motives are all impulse. But, oh ! madam, there is a natural, generous, gentle feeling about all your demeanour, from your lightest word to your most important deed, which is well calculated to make our hearts serve you, as well as our heads or our hands."

The young burgher spoke with a fervour and an enthusiasm that called the blood up for a moment into Mary's cheek. But as the chivalrous courtesy of the day often prompted expressions of much more romantic admiration, without the slightest further meaning than mere ordinary civility, Mary of Burgundy saw nothing in the conduct of the young citizen beyond dutiful and loyal affection. The possibility of her having raised a deeper or more tender feeling in the bosom of her subject



never once crossed her thoughts. It was to her as a thing impossible; and, though she certainly felt gratified by the fervent tone of loyalty in which Albert Maurice expressed himself, she dreamed not for a moment that that loyalty could ever become a more individual feeling.

"I trust, sir," she replied, "ever to merit the opinion you have expressed, and to keep the love of my good people of Ghent, as well as that of all my subjects. But, indeed, the conduct that they are now pursuing evinces but small regard either for my feelings or my interest, nor much gratitude for the first willing concession that I have made in their favour. You say, sir, you know little that has passed in the city since an early hour, listen, then, to the tidings that have reached me."

Mary then recapitulated all that she had heard concerning the tumults in different parts of the city; and a conversation of considerable length ensued, which, — from all the important and interesting circumstances discussed, from the free and unceremonious communication which it rendered necessary, and from the con-



tinual bursts of high and generous feelings, upon both parts, to which the great events they spoke of gave rise, — brought all the sentiments of the young citizen within the circle of the one deep, overpowering passion which had been long growing up in his bosom. If he came there doubting whether he loved Mary of Burgundy, before he left her presence his only doubt was, whether there was any thing else on earth worth living for but the love he felt towards her.

Such feelings had their natural effect both on his appearance and demeanour. He still maintained that tone of deep respect due from a subject to his sovereign ; but there was a brilliant energy in all he said, a spirit of gentle, chivalrous loyalty in all his professions, inspired by the great excitement under which he spoke, that raised the wonder and admiration of Mary herself, though still no one dream of bolder aspirations ever crossed her imagination.

The chamber in which this conference was held was turned towards the river, rather than to the square before the palace ; and the shouts



which had made themselves loudly audible in the apartments from which Mary had just come, had hitherto been less distinctly heard where she now stood. But, in a moment after, the multitudes which had assembled in other places seemed directing their course over a bridge, which lay a little higher up the stream ; and the sounds came with redoubled force. Shouts, cries, and songs of every kind were borne along with the wind, to the chamber in which the Princess was standing ; and, pointing to the casement, she bade the young citizen open it, and listen himself to what was passing without.

Albert Maurice did so, and, in listening, his cheek became alternately pale and red, his brow knitted, and his eye flashed ; and, turning to the Princess, he replied, “ I know not, madam, what they have done, or what they are about to do, but certainly some sort of insanity seems to have seized upon the people. However, I will this instant go forth, and, as I live, if they have committed the crimes of which I fear they are guilty, from some of the cries I have



just heard, the perpetrators shall meet the punishment they deserve."

He turned towards the door as he spoke, but Mary desired him to pause. "Stay, stay, sir, a moment," she said: "Alice, bid the page see that the way is clear."

The young lady opened the door, and whispered a few words to the boy, who waited in the passage beyond, and who instantly proceeded to ascertain that no change had taken place to obstruct the burgher's egress from the palace. Scarcely was he gone on this errand, however, when a pale reddish glare began to pour through the open window, waxing stronger each moment; and Mary, whose face was half turned towards it, started forward, exclaiming, "Look, look! Good God, they have set fire to the city!"

Albert Maurice sprang to the casement also, and, as with his right hand he threw further open the lattice, his left rested for a single moment on that of Mary of Burgundy, which she had accidentally placed upon the sill of the window. It was but for an instant, yet a thrill passed through his whole frame that made his



brain seem to reel. But he had no time to indulge such thoughts. A bright pyramid of flame was at that very moment rising up through the clear night air, making a strange and fearful contrast with the pure sweet beams of the early moon. Redder and redder the baleful glare of the fire rose up, as if striving to outshine the moonlight, and streaming over the city, displayed the dark black masses of the buildings — wall, and roof, and tower, and spire standing out in clear relief upon the bright back ground of the blaze. Thence gleaming on, the two lights were seen flashing together upon the river, amidst the innumerable black spots occasioned by the boats, in many of which a number of human figures might be descried, gazing with up-turned faces at the flame. The wooden bridge, too, with the crossing and interlacing of its manifold piles and beams, appeared at a little distance beyond — a piece of dark fine tracery upon the glittering mass of the stream; and there, too, an immense multitude were to be observed, looking on calmly at the fire which was consuming some of the finest buildings in the city.



All this was gathered by the young citizen at one glance.

"They have set fire to the prison and the hall of justice," he cried, divining in an instant, both from the direction of the flames, and the cries he had before heard, the crime that had been committed. "This must be put a stop to! Madam, farewell. When you shall hear to-morrow of the events of this night, you shall either hear that I am dead, or that I have done my duty."

The page had by this time returned; and Albert Maurice followed him with a rapid step through the same passages by which he had been conducted to his interview with the Princess. Just as they reached the ground floor of the castle, however, there was the sound of a coming step. The boy darted across the corridor in a moment, and Albert Maurice had but time to draw the cowl of his monk's gown over his head, when he was encountered by the Lord of Imbercourt, advancing with a hasty step towards the apartments of the Princess.



The young citizen, with all his feelings excited by what had just passed, was both fearless and careless of any mortal thing, and, making slight way for the nobleman to pass, was striding rapidly on after the page; but Imbercourt caught him by the arm, exclaiming, "Who are you, sir? and what do you here?"

"I do the errand on which I am sent," replied the young citizen, "and interrupt no man. Unhand me, sir; for I am not to be stayed."

"Not till I see your face," replied Imbercourt; "your voice I should know. But that form, I doubt me, is no monk's."

As he spoke, he raised his hand towards the cowl which covered the head of the young citizen. But Albert Maurice shook off his grasp in a moment, saying, "Man, you are unwise! stay me further at your peril."

"Ho! a guard without there!" shouted the Lord of Imbercourt, till the whole passages rang, and cast himself immediately in the path of the burgher. But Albert Maurice seized him in his powerful grasp, and, with one



effort sent him reeling to the further part of the corridor, where he fell almost stunned upon the floor.

. Without a moment's pause, the young citizen darted through the door by which the page had disappeared, traced without difficulty the passages which led to the postern, passed unquestioned by the sentry who was conversing with the boy, and, in a moment after, was standing upon the terrace without the palace walls.

Casting off the monk's gown, he rolled it hastily up and threw it into the water; and then striding along the narrow quay between the Cours du Prince and the river, he directed his way at once towards the bridge. It was still covered with people; and some one, recognising him as he came upon it, pronounced his name, which was instantly spoken by a hundred other voices. Still Albert Maurice passed on, forcing his way through the crowd, but marking the various countenances, as he went, by the light which the flames of the burning buildings cast upon them. There were many he recognised, but he spoke to none for



some moments, till he came to a stout honest-looking clothworker, near whom he stopped for an instant.

"Are you ready to obey my commands, Gibelin?" he demanded.

"To the death, Master Albert," replied the other; "the rogues have set fire to the hall of justice."

"I see," answered Albert Maurice; "follow me thither, and, as you go, collect as many as you can who will obey without question."

He then strode on, stopping from time to time at the various crowds, wherever he recognised a person on whom he could depend. With each of these, a momentary conversation took place, of the same nature as that which he had held with the man he called Gibelin. To some, however, his address was much more brief. With some, merely, "Follow me, Kold! follow me, Gastner!"

His commands were instantly obeyed; those he charged to collect more were successful in doing so; and as he made his way forward, a body of two or three hundred men, gathered in



this manner from the different crowds, continued pushing their way after him in an irregular manner, up the great street, in which the old prison and hall of justice were situated. Those buildings had been built so as to retire a little from the general façade of the street; and, being placed exactly opposite to each other, left a sort of square between them. The edifices on both sides were now on fire; but notwithstanding the intense heat, the place or square was filled to overflowing with people, whose appearance and occupation were altogether those of devils in human form. The blaze of the burning buildings, cast upon their swarthy and excited countenances — disfigured as they already were by drink and passion — a glare that seemed perfectly infernal. Loud shouts of exultation, or rather a yell of triumphant hatred, rent the air; and round about the square, suspended by the neck to the long stone water spouts which then distinguished the city of Ghent, were to be seen a number of human figures, quivering and convulsed in the agonies of death, while the demon shouts of the populace hailed the



contortions of their victims with horrible delight.

Such, it is well known, was the death of the unhappy eschevins, whom Charles of Burgundy had appointed for the city of Ghent; but the vengeance which was immediately taken on some of the perpetrators of that cruel act, is not so generally recorded. Albert Maurice found the multitude in the first exultation of the barbarous feat they had committed; and many of those who had taken a leading part therein, were still making a parade of their activity. The young citizen, however, hesitated not a moment, but striding up to a wretch who held the end of one of the ropes used as the means of inflicting death upon the eschevins, he seized him at once by the collar of his jerkin, and dragged him towards the middle of the square.

A momentary movement was made by the people to resent this interference, and to rescue their comrade; but he was instantly passed from the hands of Albert Maurice to the trustworthy followers whom he had called together, with the words, "To the town house!" The next



moment the young citizen, without appearing even to see or notice the threatening aspect of the people, again strode through the midst of them, and made another prisoner of a better class, thundering no measured terms of reproach upon him as he cast him back into the hands of those that followed. The multitude now perceived that amongst themselves, in every part of the square, there were persons of their own rank and appearance, acting with the young burgher, whose name, — never mentioned by any of the citizens without respect and applause, — also began to circulate rapidly amongst them. Even those most bent upon evil, not knowing who was prepared to support, and who to oppose them, lost confidence in themselves; fear, the most contagious of all diseases, seized them; and, one by one, they made their way from the scene of their criminal excesses. Those on the outside of the mass, felt those within pressing to escape, and catching the alarm, began to run also; so that in a few minutes, Albert Maurice, and the men who had followed him, alone remained in the square, together with three



prisoners, while a fourth had been hurried away.

To cut down the bodies of the unhappy men who had become the victims of popular fury was the first effort of the burgher and his companions; but as all aid in their case was found to be in vain, the attention of Albert Maurice was next turned to prevent the conflagration from spreading further than the public building in which it had originated. As they were very much isolated in their situation, this purpose was easily effected; and, as soon as it was accomplished, the young citizen proceeded with hasty steps towards the town house, where he found a number of the municipal officers in somewhat lengthy debate concerning the measures to be pursued for tranquillising the city. The superior mind of Albert Maurice instantly brought all wordy discussions to an end; and while armed parties of the burgher guard were despatched with peremptory orders to disperse the crowds, the attention of those who now ruled in Ghent was called to the case of the ruffians taken red-handed in the crime they had



committed. The ancient laws of the city were hastily consulted; were found to be conclusive in regard to their guilt and punishment; a confessor was summoned; and ere daybreak the next morning, the four persons who had acted the most prominent part in the death of the eschevins had tasted the same fate before the town hall of Ghent.

With a sternness which formed no part of his original nature, but which grows sadly and destructively upon the human heart in such scenes of excitement and violence, Albert Maurice himself saw the decree of the municipal council carried into effect ere he trod his way homeward. As soon as the execution was over, he returned to his dwelling; and exhausted with all he had gone through during the last eight and forty hours, he cast himself upon his bed, and slept.



## CHAPTER IX.

WE must now, once more, change the scene and, leaving Ghent to proceed step by step through all the mazes of anarchy and confusion, which are sure for a time to succeed the overthrow of established authority, we must trace the events which were occurring to some of the other personages connected with this true history.

Once more, then, let us turn to the forest of Hannut, which now, in the depth of winter, offered a very different scene from that which it had displayed either in the full summer or the brown autumn. It was early in the morning of the 20th of January, and, except on the scattered beeches which, mingling here and there with the oak, and the elm, and the birch, retained their crisp brown leaves longer than any of the other trees, not a bough in the wood, but, stript of all that ornamented it in the sum-



mer, was covered with a fine white coating of glistening frost-work. Little snow, indeed, covered the ground, and that which had fallen was too hard frozen to have any tenacity; but, — drifted about the forest in a fine white powder, lodged here and there amongst the withered leaves, or collected in thick sweeps upon the dingle side, — it retained no form but that given to it by the wind; so that the deep footprint of the stag or boar was effaced almost as soon as made, and the only mark by which the eye of the most experienced huntsman could have traced the lair of his quarry, would have been by the hoar frost brushed off the boughs of the thickets in the animal's course through the wood.

The morning was as clear and bright as if the sun were starting from the dark pavilion of the night, to run his race of glory through the long course of a summer's day; but the wind, whistling keenly through the woods, and tingling on the cheeks of the early forester, told that the sharp reign of winter was in the acmé of its power.

In a wide, open, grassy spot, at about half a



mile from the high road to Louvain, were collected, on the morning to which I refer, about a dozen of our good friends the green riders. One or two were on horseback, but the greater part had dismounted, and were employing themselves in all the various ways which men devise to warm themselves on a winter's morning. They were evidently waiting for some one, and though the people who are watched for by such gentry, are not generally in the most enviable situation in the world, yet, on the present occasion, the freebooters seemed to have no hostile purpose in view, and spoke of the person they expected as one of themselves.

"Cold work he will have of it, master Matthew," said one of the adventurers, addressing the florid white-haired old man, whom we have had occasion to notice somewhat particularly in the cavern.

"By my faith!" replied the other, "when any thing disagreeable is to be done, he does not spare himself."

"Ay, but such is the leader for us," replied the other. "Think you he will be long?"



It is mighty cold, and the horses are half frozen."

"Hark!" rejoined his companion; "that clatter may answer your question. By the Lord! he is coming down the hill at a fearful rate, for so slippery as it is. I trust he is not pursued. Stand to your arms, my men, and be ready to mount."

As he spoke, the sound of a horse's feet at full gallop was heard through the clear frosty air; and, in a moment after, along the little road — which wound away from the open space where the adventurers were collected over the side of a pretty steep acclivity — was seen a man on horseback, darting down towards them, without the slightest apparent regard to the sharpness of the descent, or the slipperiness of the road. He was armed like themselves, but with the distinction, that instead of the open basinet, or round steel cap, without visor, which they wore, his head was covered by a plumed casque, the beaver of which was down.

He drew not a rein till he was in the midst of them; then, with one slight touch, checked his



horse and vaulted to the ground. The haste in which he had arrived was now equalled by the rapidity of his words, as he gave out a number of different orders to the men who surrounded him, clearly and precisely, but with a celerity which showed that no time was to be lost.

"Matthew, my good lieutenant," he said, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the old man, "who is fittest to send to Germany, on an errand to a prince?"

"Why not myself?" demanded the adventurer.

"Because I want you here, and cannot do without you," replied the chief.

"Well, then, send Walter there," rejoined the old man; "he is a Frenchman, and courtly in his way."

"Courtly, and honest too," added the Vert Gallant, "which is a wonder. There, Master Walter, take that letter to the Bishop of Trier. You will find him at Cologne with the Bishop of that city. There, mount and be gone! you know your way. Here is a purse of gold to pay your expenses. The Bishop will send you on



to the Archduke. The Germans are frugal — therefore be not you over-fine; yet spare not the florins, where it may do honour to him that sent you. Away !

“ You, good Matthew, yourself,” continued the Vert Gallant, “ speed like lightning to Ghent; but cast off your steel jacket, and robe me yourself like the good burgher of a country town. Seek out your old friend Martin Fruse: confer with him, and with his nephew Albert Maurice; they are now all powerful in Ghent. Bid them beware of Louis King of France. Tell them it is his purpose to force the Princess Mary into a marriage with his puny son, and to make her yield her fair lands into his hand, that he himself may seize them all when death lays hold upon his sickly boy. Bid them oppose it by all means, but by none more than by delay. Risk not your person, however; and if you cannot speak with them in safety, write down the message, and have it given by another hand. You, Frank Von Halle — you are bold and shrewd, though you have but little speech: follow Matthew Gournay, habited as his man; but when



you are within the walls of Ghent, find out some way of speech with the Princess; and, whether in public or in private, give her that ring, with this small slip of paper. Then leave the city as quickly as you may."

"I doubt me it will be sure death," replied Von Halle, looking up with an enquiring glance.

"What! you afraid, Von Halle!" exclaimed his leader; "but go, there is no fear."

"Afraid! no, no," replied the man; "but I only thought, if I were to die, I would go home first, and, with Martin of Gravelines and Dick Drub the Devil, would drink out the pipe of sack I bought; — pity it should be wasted."

"Keep it for another time," replied the Vert Gallant, "for, by my faith, your errand to Ghent will never stop your drinking it."

"Well, well; if I die, tell the other two to finish it," replied the man; "pity it should be wasted;" and so sprang on his horse.

"Hold, Matthew," cried the Vert Gallant, as the two soldiers were about to depart without more words; "meet me five days hence in the wood between Swynaerde and Deynse. So



lose no time. You know the red cross near Astene."

The two instantly rode off; and the Vert Gallant then turned to the others, and continued his orders, for marching the whole force he had under his command — which seemed to be considerable — into the woods in the neighbourhood of Ghent.

Those woods, though then very extensive, and covering acres of ground which are now in rich cultivation, were nevertheless too small to afford perfect shelter and concealment for such a large body of adventurers as had long tenanted the vaster and less frequented forest-tracks near Hannut, unless the entire band were subdivided into many smaller ones, and distributed through various parts of the country. All this, however, was foreseen and arranged by the leader of the free companions; and it is probable that he also trusted to the distracted state of the country — throughout which any thing like general police was, for the time, at an end — for perfect immunity in his bold advance to the very gates of the capital of Flanders.



All his orders were speedily given, and one by one his companions left him, as they received their instructions, so that at length he stood alone. He paused for a moment on the spot, patting the neck of his strong fiery horse; and, — as men will sometimes do when they fancy themselves full of successful designs, and are excited by the expectation of great events, — addressing to the nearest object of the brute creation, those secret out-breakings of the heart, which he might have feared to trust in the unsafe charge of his fellow men.

“Now, my bold horse, now,” he exclaimed, “the moment is come, for which, during many a long year, I have waited and watched! The star of my house is once more in the ascendant, and the reign of tyranny is at an end — let him who dares, stand between me and my right, for not another hour will I pause till justice is fully done.”

While he was thus speaking, a sort of slight distant murmur came along, so mingled with the whistling of the wind, that he had to listen for some moments before he could ascertain whether



it proceeded from the mere increased waving of the boughs occasioned by the gale rising, or whether it was the distant sound of a number of persons travelling along the road which he had just passed.

He was soon satisfied; and as he clearly distinguished voices, and the jingling tramp of a travelling party of that day, he sprang upon his horse, leaped him over a small brook that trickled half-congealed through the grass, and plunged into a deep thicket beyond, the bushes and trees of which were of sufficient height to screen him from the observation of the passengers.

The party whose tongues he had heard soon came on. It comprised about thirty people, all well armed, and dressed splendidly, bearing the straight cross, which at that time distinguished France from Burgundy. The splendid apparel of the whole body, the number of the men at arms, of which it was principally composed, together with certain signs of peaceful dispositions on their own part, evinced at once, that the cavalcade which came winding along



the road, consisted of some envoy from France and his escort, furnished with those letters of safe-conduct which guarded them from any hostile act on the part of the government of the country through which they passed, but prepared to resist any casual attacks from the lawless bands that were then rife.

Not exactly at the head of the cavalcade, — for two stout archers armed at all points led the way, — but at the head of the principal body, appeared a small, dark, ill-featured man, whose person even an extraordinary display of splendour in his apparel sufficed not to render any thing but what it was, insignificant. Velvet and gold and nodding plumes could do nothing in his favour; and the only thing which made his appearance in any degree remarkable, was an air of silent, calm, and determined cunning, which had in it something fearful from its very intensity. One gazed upon him as on a serpent, which, however small and powerless in appearance, inspires terror in much mightier things than itself, from the venom of its fangs.

He rode on quietly, speaking little to any one ;



and that which he did say, was all uttered in a calm, soft, insinuating tone, which corresponded well with the expression of his countenance. The rest of the party laughed and talked with much less ceremony and restraint than the presence of so dignified a person as an ambassador might have required, had he been by state and station fit to have inspired respect. Such seemed not to be the case in the present instance; and though not one word on any other than the most common place subjects, passed amongst the followers of the Count de Meulan, — for so the ambassador was called, — yet their light laughter and gay jokes, breaking forth every moment close to his ear, were any thing but ceremonious or reverential.

Some little difficulty seemed now to occur in regard to the road that the party were travelling. It appeared that hitherto, on turning slightly from the high road, they had followed the foot-marks of the Vert Gallant's charger; taking them for those left by the horse of an avant-courier, who had been despatched to prepare for them at the next town. When they



found, however, that the steps turned into the savannah, and lost themselves in a number of others, a halt immediately took place; and, after a short consultation, by order of the ambassador, the whole party wheeled round, and wisely returned to the high road.

Their whole proceedings, however, had been watched by one they knew not of; and almost before they were out of sight, the Vert Gallant emerged from his concealment, and, with a laugh which rang with contempt, turned his horse's head and galloped away.

The Count de Meulan — or, in other words, Olivier le Dain, the barber of Louis XI., whom that monarch had raised from the lowest class for the basest qualities, and whom he now sent as ambassador, to treat with the young heiress of Burgundy, and to intrigue with her subjects, — had hardly proceeded two hours on the high road, when a fat rolling monk of the order of St. Francis, mounted on a sleek mule, the picture of himself, joined the rear of the ambassador's escort, and entering into jovial conversation with some of the men at arms, besought their



leave to travel as far as they went on the road to Ghent under their protection, alleging that the country was in such a disturbed state, that even a poor brother like himself could not travel in any safety. The light-hearted Frenchmen easily granted his request, observing, in an under tone to each other, that Oliver the Devil, — such was the familiar cognomen of the respectable personage they followed, — could not in all conscience travel without a monk in his train.

Father Barnabas, whom we have seen before, no sooner found himself added to the suite of the ambassador, than he employed those means he well knew would make his society agreeable to the men at arms who had given him protection; and by many a jolly carouse, and many a licentious bacchanalian song, he soon won favour on all hands. Even the barber Count himself, whose more sensual propensities were only restrained by his cunning, found no fault with the merry friar, whose sly and cutting jests, combined with the sleek and quiet look of stupidity which always accompanied them, found means



to draw up even his lip into a smile, that might have been mistaken for a sneer. On one occasion he felt disposed to put some shrewd questions to worthy father Barnabas, as to his situation and pursuits ; and even began to do so on the second night of their journey, as, occupying the best seat by the fire in the little hostelry at which they lodged, he eyed the impenetrable fat countenance before him with the sort of curiosity one feels to pry into any thing that we see will be difficult to discover.


But the monk was at least his match ; and if the weapons with which they engaged in the keen contest of their wits were not precisely the same on both parts, the combat resembled that of the elephant and the rhinoceros, — whenever Oliver the wicked strove to seize the monk and close with him, his antagonist ran under him and gored him. Thus, when, by some casual words, the envoy thought he had discovered that his companion was a native of Saarvelt, and suddenly put the question to him at once, the other replied, — “ No, no ; I only remember it well, on account of a barber’s



boy who was there, and whose real name was — pho ! I forget his real name ; but he is a great man now-a-days, and has held a basin under the nose of a king.”

The quiet, unconscious manner in which this was said, left Olivier le Dain, with all his cunning, in doubt whether the jolly friar really recognised in him the barber’s boy of Saarlvelt, or whether the allusion had been merely accidental ; but he resolved not to question any more a person of such a memory, and possibly determined to take care that the most effectual stop should be put to its exercise in future, if these plans regarding Ghent should prove successful, in the execution of which he was now engaged.

Too wise, however, to show any degree of harshness towards the monk at the time, — a proceeding which would have pointed home the sarcasm for his men at arms, on whose faces he thought he had remarked a sneering smile as the other spoke, — he allowed good Father Barnabas to travel on under his escort, meditating a lesson for him when he arrived at his journey’s end, which some might have thought severe. In the





mean time, as they travelled on, there was about the monk a sort of subdued triumph—a self-satisfied chuckle in his laugh, especially when he jested the gay and boasting Frenchmen upon their arms and their exploits—that occasionally wakened a suspicion in the mind of Olivier le Dain, whose own conduct was far too crooked for him to believe that any one else could act straightforwardly.

Still no danger appeared; and the party arrived in perfect safety, within about four leagues of Ghent. There, after pausing for supper at an inn, it was found, on preparing to resume their journey, and enter the city that night, that the person who had hitherto guided them, was so drunk as hardly to be able to sit his horse. The ambassador demanded a guide of the host, but none could be found; and the worthy keeper of the inn answered, with true Flemish coolness, that he would not spare any one of his own household. “Could not the monk guide them?” he demanded. “If his eyes served him, he had seen his broad face in that part of the world before.”



“ Ay, marry can I, my son,” replied Father Barnabas ; “ but I offer no service before it is asked. There is a proverb against it, man.”

As the affairs he had to transact were of deep importance, and minutes were of the utmost consequence to success, Olivier le Dain, though by no means fond of riding at night, and not at all prepossessed in favour of the monk, consented to accept him as a guide ; and the party accordingly set out. By a whispered arrangement between the respectable Count de Meulan and the Captain of his escort, however, a large part of the armed attendants rode on at a sufficient distance before, to enable Oliver to make his retreat if he heard any attack upon this avant guard, while the monk, riding between two troopers, close to the worthy barber, was held as a sort of hostage for the security of the road, on which he was about to pilot them. Father Barnabas, whether he perceived any thing strange in the array in which they set out, or not, made no opposition ; and jogged on contentedly upon his mule, chattering gaily as he went, and seasoning his discourse with va-



rious choice allusions to barbers, and basins, and beards, much more to the gratification of the men at arms than of Olivier le Dain.

Thus proceeded the cavalcade, till they reached the little wood of Swynaerde, near Merebek, where the road from Alost, in ancient days, crossed the Scheldt, over a wooden bridge, where a certain pontage was charged upon each horse that passed. Here the mind of the barber ambassador was in some degree relieved, by hearing from the toll-taker, that all was quite quiet and safe, though six good miles still lay between him and Ghent, and that through a dark wood of tall trees. At the distance of about a mile from the bridge, was a red cross, marking the direction of four different roads, which there intersected each other; and the whole party paused, as it was too dark to read the directions thereon inscribed, to receive the instructions of the monk.

“Straight on! straight on!” cried Father Barnabas;—and the first part of the escort moved forward, though somewhat nearer to the rest of the body than before; but the mo-



ment they had again resumed their march there was a low sharp whistle, and a sound of rushing and rustling all around them. Olivier le Dain, who was already following the van, drew in his rein; and the whistle, repeated a thousand times in different parts of the wood round about, showed him at once that his party was beset. Fear certainly was the predominant feeling in his mind; but even that very absorbing sensation did not banish a passion equally strong; and, while he turned his horse's head to fly back to the bridge with all speed, he did not fail to say, in a voice but little changed from its ordinary calm and sustained tone, — “We are betrayed! kill the monk!” But both Oliver's purpose of escape, and his desire of vengeance, were disappointed. At the very first whistle, the friar had slipped, unperceived, from his sleek mule, and, passing under the animal's belly, was no longer to be seen; and before the luckless ambassador could reach the road, which led away to the bridge, he found it occupied by armed men. To whichever side he turned, the same sight presented itself; and



even on the highway leading to Ghent he found a still stronger party interposed between him and the first division of his escort. He thus stood in the midst of the open square of the cross road, accompanied by about twelve attendants, and surrounded by a body of adventurers which could not be less than one or two hundred, but which fear and darkness magnified into a much greater number. The scene and situation were by no means pleasant. Not a sound was to be heard, but the echo of horses' feet ringing over the hard frozen ground,—from which he justly inferred that the advanced party of his escort, by whom he was neither loved nor respected, finding themselves infinitely over-matched, had galloped off, leaving him to his fate ;—and nothing was to be seen in the darkness of the night, but the black trunks of the trees, slightly relieved by the colour of the ground, which was covered by a thin drift of snow, while a number of dim human forms appeared, occupying all the different roads; and a multitude of faint dull spots of fire, drawn in a complete circle round him, showed



the ambassador that the slow matches of the arquebusiers, into whose hands he had fallen, were prepared against resistance.

For a moment or two not a word was spoken; but at length a voice not far from him exclaimed, "Lord a' mercy! Only to think of the barber's boy of Saarvelt coming ambassador to Ghent! Lack a day! lack a day, Noll! lack a day! thou art become a mighty great man! Thou hast lathered and shaved to some purpose, ha, ha, ha!" And the voice of the monk was drowned in his own laughter, the contagious merriment of whose thick plum porridge sounds instantly affected all around; and the whole forest rang and echoed to the peals.

"What would ye, fair sirs?" demanded the soft silken tones of Olivier le Dain. "If laughter be all ye seek, laugh on; but let me pass upon my way. If it be gold ye want, there, take my purse; I make you welcome to it."

"A fool and his money!" cried the monk, snatching the purse. "But, 'faith! Master Noll,



the barber, it is generous of you to give, what you cannot keep unless we like it."

"Cease your fooling, monk!" cried the stern voice of some one advancing from the wood. "Get off your horse, Sir Barber; you shall know my pleasure with you, when it suits me to tell it. And now answer me! How dare you, a low mechanical slave, presume to undertake a mission to the Duchess of Burgundy, without one drop of noble blood in your veins?"

"Your pardon, fair sir!" replied Oliver, dismounting slowly, and standing in an attitude of deprecation, before the tall commanding figure by whom he was addressed;—"your pardon; I was rendered noble by my sovereign Lord the King, for the very purpose, as his letters patent will show."

"Faith! the letters patent must be miraculous ones, that could ennoble one drop of your slave's blood," replied the Vert Gallant. "There, take him away! Treat him not ill; but keep him safe and fast. Search his person, his servants, and his sumpter horses. Examine well



the stuffings of the saddles, and the paddings of their coats; and bring every paper and parchment you may find."

"But listen to me, fair sir! Only hear me!" entreated Olivier le Dain. "Surely you will not show such treatment to an ambassador. My papers and my person are sacred in every Christian land."

"Pshaw!" cried the Vert Gallant. "When Louis, King of France, so far forgets what is due to a princess, as to send to the heiress of Burgundy a mean, cunning barber, as an ambassador, he can only expect that others will also forget the character with which he chooses to invest his lackey. Besides, what is it to me that you are ambassador to Burgundy? You are no ambassador to me. I am duke of the forests; and when you come as envoy to me, you shall have forest cheer. Away with him, and do my bidding!"

Closely guarded, but well treated, Olivier le Dain and his attendants were detained for some days in the woods near Ghent, during the greater part of which time, though occasionally



compelled to sleep in a hut of boughs, they resided generally in a small lonely house, which had belonged in former days to the forester.

At length, one morning, suddenly, while the twilight was still grey, the ambassador and his followers were called from their repose, and placed upon the horses which brought them. All their apparel and jewels were restored, as well as their arms; and of the treasure, which the barber had brought with him, for the purpose of bribing the populace of Ghent, a sufficient portion was left in his possession, to maintain his dignity, but not to effect the object he had intended.

He was then told to follow his own course, for that he was free to come or go; and with all speed he turned his rein towards Ghent, at which place he arrived in safety, though seven days after the period which he had fixed for his coming.



## CHAPTER X.

IN the mean time, many events had occurred within the walls of the city of Ghent, of which some account must be given, though perhaps it may be necessary to follow the same desultory manner in which they are related in shrewd old Philip de Commines and pompous Jean de Molinet.

The quelled tumult, the extinguished fire, and the prompt justice done upon some of the incendiaries, spread in a thousand shapes through the town; and as, whenever Fame has marked a hero for her own, she never fails to load him with many more honours than his due, Albert Maurice had soon acquired the reputation of a thousand miracles of skill, and courage, and judgment, far beyond the acts he had really performed. Thus, when, after a brief sleep and a hasty repose, he issued forth from his house the next morning, and rode on to the town house,



he found the people—on whose wrath for their thwarted passions he had fully counted—ready, on the contrary, to shout gratulations and plaudits on his path. At the town house, the syndics and notables of all the trades had already assembled, and the druggist Ganay was in the very act of proposing that an address of thanks and applause should be voted to the young burgher for his noble and courageous conduct of the preceding evening. Albert Maurice, however, was not to be blinded; and even when the druggist was declaiming vehemently against the outrages of the foregoing night, and lamenting that the populace had dealt upon the eschevins without due judgment by law, the eye of the young citizen fixed upon him with a glance of keen reproach, which Ganay at once translated, and translated rightly—"You have deceived me."

To have done so, however, was no matter of shame to the dark and artful man who was speaking; and, as their eyes met, a slight smile of triumphant meaning curled his lip, while, with a fresh burst of eloquence, he called upon the assembly to testify their admiration of the man who had saved the city from pillage



and conflagration. The address of thanks was carried by acclamation; and Albert Maurice soon found that it was the determination of the more active part of the citizens, under the immediate influence of Ganay, to carry forward, with eager rapidity, all those bold measures which would deprive the sovereigns of any real power for the future, and rest it entirely in the hands of the people — or rather, in the hands of whatever person had courage, energy, and talent, to snatch it from their grasp, and retain it in his own. Twenty-six eschevins, together with the lieutenant-bailli, and three pensioners, were immediately elected by the citizens, to replace those who had been massacred, and to administer the law; but the grand bailli and chief pensioner were still to be elected, and Albert Maurice with surprise heard the determination of the people to confound those two high offices in his own person. From the body of magistrates, three persons were selected, as a president and two consuls, as they were called, and extraordinary powers were entrusted to them. The president named at once was the chief officer of the city, Albert Maurice; and



Ganay, the druggist, was added as one of the consuls. The third office was not so easily filled; and a strong attempt was made to raise to it a fierce and brutal man, whose talents perhaps appeared greater than they really were, from the total want of any restraints of feeling and moral principle, to limit the field in which they were exercised.

Some one, however, luckily proposed the name of worthy Martin Fruse; and his nomination, seconded by the eloquent voice of his nephew, was instantly acquiesced in by all. A slight cloud passed over the brow of the druggist, as he found his power likely to be counterbalanced by the influence of one, who, if he possessed no other quality to render him great, had at least that rectitude of feeling, which was a fearful stumbling-block in the way of crooked designs. But unchangeable determination of purpose, and unscrupulous exercise of means, had rendered the druggist so often successful in things which seemed hopeless, that he bore, with scarcely a care, any change of circumstances, confident of finding some path to his object in the end.



After one of those noisy and tumultuous assemblies, in the course of which, though no business is transacted with calm reason, an infinity of acts are performed by impulse, the meeting at the town house broke up; and while Martin Fruse returned to his dwelling on foot, as was his invariable custom, Albert Maurice and the druggist mounted their horses, and rode slowly homeward. Their conversation was long and rapid—too long, indeed, for transcription here; but the commencement of it must not be omitted, even for the sake of brevity.

“Ganay, you have deceived me!” said Albert Maurice, as soon as they were in some degree free from the crowd.

“I have!” was the calm reply of the druggist. “You are ungrateful, Albert. You have never thanked me for it. What, you would pretend you do not see cause for thanks! Had not the populace taken it into their own hands, the council must have condemned those foul vultures who have so long preyed upon us. Ay, I say *must*; and then whose name, but that of Albert Maurice, must have stood amongst others in the order for their death? As I have managed it,



the severity was no act of yours. You have offended none—no, not even the Princess; and, on the contrary, you have had the means of adding, in one night, more to your fame, than your whole life has won before. You have had an opportunity of winning honour and respect from commons and from nobles, and love and gratitude from Mary of Burgundy. Still farther, have you not in one night, in consequence of acts with which you accuse me almost as a crime—have you not climbed to the very height of power in your native land?—ay, I say the height of power, for who is there, be he Duke, or Count, or Prince, who has so much authority as he who sways the power of all the people of Flanders? A few steps more, and your hand may seize the ——”

“The what?” demanded Albert Maurice, as the other paused.

“No matter,” replied the druggist. “The gates of ambition are cast wide open before you; and you must on, whether you will or not.”

“Ha! and who shall force me?” demanded Albert Maurice.

“Fate! — Destiny!” replied the druggist.



" 'Tis many years ago, and you were then a mere boy ; but I remember your fate was predicted in the forest of Hannut by that gloomy old Lord, whose only commune, for many a year, had been with the bright stars. 'Twas one night when we fell accidentally into the hands of the free companions — and he foretold that you should go on from power to power, successfully through life ; and that no one should check you but yourself."

" And do *you* believe in such vain dreams ?" rejoined Albert Maurice.

" I believe," replied the druggist gravely, " that our lot through life is immutably fixed from the cradle to the grave ; that like a wild horse we may foam and plunge, or like a dull jade plod onward at a foot pace — but that the firm rider, Fate, still spurs us on upon the destined course ; and when the stated goal is won, casts down the bridle on our neck, and leaves us to repose. I believe, too, that the stars, as well as many other things, may tell, to those who study them, events to come ; for depend upon it, every thing throughout the universe fits closely, like the



blocks cut for a perfect arch ; so that, from the form and position of the neighbouring stones, a person, who has deeply studied, may tell to a certainty the shape and size of any other."

Albert Maurice mused for a moment over the confession of this strange creed, and its illustration, and then demanded,—“ What did the old Lord say concerning me ? ”

The druggist repeated his former words ; and his young companion again mused for a brief space. Then suddenly bringing back the conversation to the matter in which it arose, he said,—“ Ganay, you have deceived me ; and not for my interest, but for your own revenge. You have worked your will ; and I trust that you are now sated. Better for us both to labour together as far as may be, than stand in the very outset face to face as foes. Are you contented with the blood already shed ? ”

“ There must be one more ! ” said the druggist resolutely.

“ And who do you aim at now ? ” demanded the young citizen, with no small loathing and horror towards his companion ; but yet with a



conviction that, by some means, he would accomplish his purpose.

“It matters not,” replied Ganay; “but set your mind at ease. The man to whom I point is less an enemy to myself than an enemy to the state; and I give you my promise that I will practise nought against his life but with your consent. So guilty is he, and so convinced shall you be of his guilt, that your own hand shall sign the warrant for his death. But, oh! Albert Maurice, if you believe that the blood shed last night is all that must be shed to effect the purposes you seek, sadly, sadly do you deceive yourself. Prepare to bid it flow like water, or betake you to a monastery! Ambition joined to faint-hearted pity, is like a tame lion at a show, led about by a woman.”

“But there is such a thing as patriotism,” replied Albert Maurice;—yet he named the word but faintly, compared with the tone he would have given it three days before.

“Ay,” said the druggist; “patriotism! The first step to ambition—but that stage is past.”



Well did Ganay know that there exists no means of persuading a human being to any course of action, so powerful as by convincing him it is inevitable. To do so, however, there must be probability as a basis ; and Ganay had watched too closely the most minute turns of his companion's behaviour during many months, not to divine the spark of ambition lying half smothered at the bottom of his heart. Nor had the effect of Mary of Burgundy's eyes upon the colour and the voice of Albert Maurice been lost upon the keen spirit that followed him ; and he fancied he beheld an easy method of bending him to his own purpose. He saw, indeed, that, if either by love, or any other means, he could fan that spark into a flame, he must leave him to run his course without a struggle, or a hope to deprive him of the prize ; nay, that he must aid him with his whole cunning to raise up a new authority in the land, on the basis of that they were about to overthrow. But Ganay was not ambitious of aught but avarice and revenge ; and he soon perceived that these two master passions of his soul *must*



be gratified by Albert Maurice in his ascent to power.

As he rode on, he spoke long of their future prospects. He cast away, at once, the enthusiastic cant he had at one time assumed towards him, of patriotism and the entire abnegation of self; and, in order to habituate his mind fully to the dreams of ambition, he spoke of them as things already determined and to be. But still, to smooth the transition, he failed not to point out the mighty benefits that a ruler with a truly liberal heart might confer upon his people — it mattered not what he was called — governor, lord, duke, prince, or king. As for a pure republic, the land was not yet in a state fit for it, he said: but what a boon — a mighty boon — might not that man grant to the whole world, who, starting up from amongst the people, were to rule them for their own happiness alone, and to show to other monarchs the immense advantages of such a sway.

“But if you speak of this land,” replied Albert Maurice, in whose heart he had discovered the unfortified spot, — “but if you



speak of this land, how can any man so start up, without tearing her inheritance from the gentlest, the noblest of beings?"

"By one means alone," replied Ganay, in a grave decided tone; "by uniting her fate with his own."

Albert Maurice, thrown off his guard by so bold and straightforward an allusion to that which was passing in his own heart, suddenly drew in his reins, and glanced his eye over the countenance of the druggist, to see if there were no sneer at the presumption of his very dreams, hidden beneath the calm tone the other assumed. But all was tranquil, and even stern; and, after a momentary pause, the young burgher replied, though with a flushed and burning cheek,—“If, as we know her to be, she is so gentle, and noble, and kind-hearted, as you admit, why not leave her to rule her hereditary lands by the dictates of her generous will?"

"What! before a year be over," replied Ganay, "to give her hand, and with it the wealth, and welfare, and happiness of her people, to some of the proud tyrants under



- which the country groans — or, at the instigation of her intriguing ministers, to bestow the whole upon some foreign prince, who will come amongst us without one sympathy, to grind into the dust the stranger subjects given him like serfs, as a part of his wife's portion! — Is this what you would have?"

Albert Maurice was silent, but not so Ganay; and as they proceeded, with poisonous eloquence he poured forth every argument, to show both the necessity and the facility of the course he suggested. He cited Artevelte, as an instance of what talented ambition had accomplished in that very city, and in an age when all the institutions of feudal pride were a thousand-fold stricter than they had since become. He depicted him, now a lackey in a noble house in France, and then a mead brewer in Ghent, and then a popular leader, and then a companion of princes, seated beside the conquering and accomplished Edward of England, treating as a prince with Philip of France, waging war at the head of mighty armies, and balancing the fate of Europe by his power. He had fallen, at length, he said, it was true; but he had fallen by his



vices and his follies; and as far as virtues, talents, courage, or accomplishments went, could Artevelte compete, for one hour, with the man to whom he then spoke. The one was a lackey risen from the lowest order of the state, the other sprung from the highest class of the burghers of the first commercial city in the north of Europe; — burghers who already ranked almost with nobility, and who, in fact, should rank far higher.

With the skill of a practised musician, whose finger lights with nice precision on all the tones and half tones of his instruments, Ganay found means to touch every feeling in the bosom of the young burgher, and make every chord vibrate with the sound that he desired. True it is, indeed, that the heart of Albert Maurice was not one to have been thus worked upon, had not the feelings been already there; and the task of his companion, — an easy one in comparison, — was merely to excite those feelings into stronger action.

At length they reached the door of his own dwelling; and Albert Maurice alighted from his horse, without asking the druggist to do so



too: but Ganay rode on contented; for he saw that he had given the young citizen matter for thoughts which he sought to indulge in private, and he desired no better. Nor had his words failed to sink deep. Albert Maurice, indeed, passed rapidly over, in his own mind, all the intermediate steps; but there rested behind, as a result, the proud, the inspiring conviction, that all which he chose to snatch at, was within his grasp,—that in one single day he had reached a height of power, from which it was but a step to the side of Mary of Burgundy; and the conviction was a dangerous one for his virtue and his peace. Much, however, was still to be done; and he sat down to revolve all that must be attempted, to render the daring hopes of mingled love and ambition, with which his own heart beat, a passion of the people—to crush, or scatter, or circumvent the many rivals that must and would arise—and to win the love of her, upon whose affections all his dreams were founded. For the latter object, he felt that it was necessary to bury deep in his own heart the aspirations which rose within it,



till manifold communings, service, and tenderness, should have ripened the esteem, in which he saw he was held, into warmer feelings. Thus he pondered, till, before he was aware, schemes were formed, and deeds were prepared, which all eternity could not annul.

The following days passed much in the same manner ; but each day brought forward to the light, some of the many difficulties with which the young citizen would have to contend in his progress towards the great object before his eyes ; but which, having calculated upon them from the first, he was prepared to meet as soon as they assumed a tangible form. During the course of that morning which followed the day of his elevation to the supreme power in the city, the levy of a large body of troops was voted, and the entire command was assigned to himself : but, before night, the Lord of Ravestein, the Duke of Cleves, and the Bishop of Liege arrived, to counsel and support the Princess ; and though each came separately, their trains, united, amounted to nearly a thousand men. A wary guard, however, was held upon



the gates of Ghent; and only thirty attendants were allowed to pass within the walls in company with each of the noble visitors, while, much to the discontent of their lords, the rest were sent back to their various territories.

A new scene of intrigue immediately followed the arrival of these princes in the palace; and it soon reached the ears of Albert Maurice, that the Duke of Cleves was moving heaven and earth to obtain the hand of the orphan Princess of Burgundy for his son. Almost at the same time, good Martin Fruse received intelligence, from a quarter which we already know, that Louis XI. sought to unite France and Burgundy by an union between the heiress of Charles the Bold, and his sickly child the Dauphin: and it soon became evident, that Imbercourt and Hugonet, supported by the Lord of Ravestein, were eagerly pressing Mary to sacrifice her own feelings to the benefit of her country, and to bestow her hand upon the feeble boy.

Clear, however — most clear, it was, both to Albert Maurice and to the druggist Ganay, that while these parties contended for mastery,



they must equally court the people of Ghent; and more especially must bow to the young citizen himself, whose power they all well knew, and whose designs they did not suspect. Of neither of the parties at the court did Albert Maurice at first entertain much fear; for he felt sure that the heart of Mary of Burgundy, however tutored to sacrifice her own will, would strongly revolt against either alliance,—the one with a fierce and brutal sot—the other with a sickly child. But tidings speedily arrived, which made him fear that force or terror would soon compel the unhappy girl to yield herself to France. News now reached him from an unknown hand, that Louis was already in the field; that Picardy was full of the troops of France; and that Commynes and Bourbon were advancing along the line of the Somme. An ambassador, too, he was warned at the same time, was on his way from France to Ghent; and to show the young citizen that he was sent rather to tamper with the people, than to negotiate with the Princess, or even with the municipal council, copies of his commission and instructions



reached him from an unknown source, together with an assurance that some days would yet elapse before he could appear at the gates.

The near approach of the ambassador, whom we have already seen delayed on his journey, remained unknown in the palace; but hourly tidings were received of the progress of the French King, and of his unjust claims upon the whole inheritance of the late Duke of Burgundy. The pretences he set forth were so futile and absurd — so contrary to every principle of law or justice — that every one believed his sole motive was to force the heiress of Burgundy into an immediate marriage with his son. Imbercourt, Hugonet, and all the ministers of the late Duke, saw his proceedings in the same point of view; and incessantly besought the unhappy Mary to yield to her fate, and, before her dominions were entirely incorporated with France, to avert the misfortunes that must fall upon herself and her people, by yielding her hand to the Dauphin.

The same conclusion in regard to the motives of Louis XI. was drawn by the Duke of Cleves;



but the result on his own conduct was totally different. Instead of beseeching Mary to yield to necessity, he opposed such advice with determined and angry vehemence. He stigmatised Hugonet and Imbercourt as traitors ; and, in order to destroy the powerful party opposed to his own views in the council of the Princess, he laid himself out to court the people ; rode side by side with Albert Maurice through the streets of the city, amidst the shouts of the multitude ; and, after having excited the municipal body to petition that their president might have a seat in the provincial council of Flanders, he himself presented the address, which he knew that neither Mary nor her ministers dared to refuse.

Albert Maurice, however, suffered himself not to be dazzled : and though joy inexpressible thrilled at his heart at every triumphant step he took in advance ; though his whole soul rejoiced at the constant opportunity now afforded him of daily communication with her he dared to love ; yet he allowed neither passion nor success for a moment to relax his energies or his



watchfulness; and he yielded to the pretensions of the Duke of Cleves in favour of his son, only so far as might stay the precipitate haste with which the French alliance might otherwise have been concluded.

With Imbercourt he clashed continually; and the firm, calm reasoning of the minister was constantly met and overpowered by the fiery and brilliant eloquence of the young citizen. Nor was he, even in opposing her faithful and her esteemed minister, without deriving some encouragement from the eyes of Mary herself, whenever the discussion took place in her presence: for though she both loved and revered the wise and gallant friend of her father, who advocated, for her own interests, the proposed union with the Dauphin; yet to her heart that union was so repugnant, that she could not but look with pleasure on every one who opposed it, nor listen without delight to arguments which gave her new courage to resist.

Nor did Albert Maurice ever support the idea of her marriage with another; so that while advancing his own design, and winning both her



gratitude and admiration, he was never found in opposition to her wishes ; and still, when he appeared, she welcomed his coming with a smile and with a look of pleasure, which, without the slightest purpose of deceit, served painfully to deceive.

Nevertheless, the Duke of Cleves made rapid progress; and, not contented with the efforts of the young citizen to oppose the French alliance, he left no means untried to stimulate the people to support his own design. The watchful eye of Albert Maurice was indeed upon him; but still his strides towards the accomplishment of his schemes were more speedy than the other had anticipated; and the cries he heard, when once riding towards the palace, of "Long live the Duke of Cleves! Long live his gallant son!" showed him at once that it was time to raise up some barrier against his pretensions. At the same time, he felt, that to give even a slight support to the opposite party might prove fatal to his hopes; and, after a long consultation with Ganay, he determined to seek out some one who might openly pretend to Mary's hand, and



draw away the countenance of the people from the Duke of Cleves; but whose pretensions would be even more repugnant, not only to herself, but to her ministers, her friends, and her nobles, than even his own might prove thereafter. But who was to be the man?

Accompanied by the crowd of attendants, who now always followed his footsteps when he rode forth, as chief magistrate of Ghent, Albert Maurice hastened to the palace, some minutes before the council met, and was admitted to the presence of the Princess, whose smile gave him even a more glad reception than ordinary. She was not alone, however; for besides her usual train of ladies, a page, a chamberlain, and a man dressed as a peasant, but whose scarred cheek told tales of warlike broils, stood before her when he entered.

“Oh! you are most welcome, Sir President,” said the Princess, “and have come to afford me counsel at a good moment. Here is a ring just returned to me, which I gave some months ago to a stranger who saved me, I believe, from death, in a thunder storm, near Tirlemont. I



promised, at the same time, that on his sending it back, I would grant whatever he might ask, if it were consistent with my honour and my dignity. Look what he says on this slip of parchment.”—“He, to whom the Duchess of Burgundy gave this ring, demands, as the boon of which it is a pledge, the instant liberation of Adolphus Duke of Gueldres, and his restoration to his own domains.”

Albert Maurice almost started; for there was a strange coincidence between the demand which the Princess had just read, and the thoughts which had been passing in his mind as he rode thither. “Lady,” he said, “it seems to me that there is but one counsel to be given you. Your word is pledged; the liberation of the Duke of Gueldres—monster though he be—is consistent with your honour and dignity; and your promise must be fulfilled.”

“You always judge nobly, Sir President,” replied the Princess; “and I thank you now, and ever shall thank you, for supporting that which is just and generous, however contrary it may be to apparent interests.”



“Believe me, madam,” replied the young citizen, bending low to conceal the joy that sparkled in his eyes,—“believe me, that it shall ever be my endeavour to strive both to obtain your best interests, and those of the country, which are, indeed, inseparable; and I would ask you as a boon, through all the future — whatever you may see or think strange in my demeanour — to believe that your good and my country’s are still the motive.”

“I will—I will, indeed,” replied the Princess; “for it would be hard to make me suppose that you, whom I have seen act so nobly in circumstances of personal danger and difficulty, would forget your honour and integrity, when trusted by our countrymen and your sovereign.”

A slight flush passed over the cheek of Albert Maurice, at such praise. It was not exactly that he knew himself undeserving of it, for he had laboured hard and successfully to convince himself that his own aggrandisement, the welfare of the country—ay, and he almost hoped, the happiness of Mary herself—were inseparably united. He replied, however—not



with words of course, for his lightest thoughts were seldom common-place—but vaguely; and, after a few questions addressed to the man who bore the ring, which he seemed unwilling to answer, the Princess rendered her promise to liberate the Duke of Gueldres definite, and the messenger was suffered to depart.

At the meeting of the council, which followed immediately, the matter was discussed and concluded, and the orders to set the Duke at liberty were instantly despatched. It was accompanied, however, by the express command of the Princess—whose abhorrence for that base, unnatural son, turbulent subject, and faithless friend, was unconcealed—that he should immediately retire to his own domains, and never present himself before her.

More important matters occupied the council also. New tidings had been received from the frontiers; and all those tidings were evil. No doubt could now exist, that while his principal officers were invading the Duchy of Burgundy in the east, Louis XI., with an overwhelming force, was marching onward towards

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Flanders, taking possession of all those fair lands which had descended to the unhappy Princess at the death of her father, and meeting with little opposition on his way. Already Abbeville had thrown open its gates. Ham, Bohaim, St. Quentin, Roye, and Montdidier, had followed ; and Peronne—proud, impregnable Peronne—had been yielded at the first summons.

Again the Lord of Imbercourt boldly and strongly urged the absolute necessity of propitiating the King of France, and arresting his farther progress, by the immediate union, or at least affiancing, of the Princess of Burgundy and the heir of the French crown. It was the only means, he said—it was the only hope of preserving any part of the dominions, which, by various events, had been united under the coronet of Burgundy ; and was it not better, he asked, for the Princess to carry them as a dowry to her husband, than to come portionless to the same prince at last, and receive the honour of his alliance as a matter of grace and favour ?

“My Lords,” replied Albert Maurice, rising as soon as the other had sat down, “already a



thousand times have you heard my arguments against the base and ungenerous step proposed, often have I shown, by reasoning, that the interests of France and Burgundy are as distinct as it is possible to conceive, and that centuries must elapse before they can be united. But, if such be the case with the Duchy of Burgundy itself, and all its immediate dependencies, how much more so is it the case with Flanders and Brabant. With England, the eternal enemy of France, has ever been our great commercial intercourse; to our friendship with England do we owe our commercial existence; and the moment that this land is united to the enemy of that great country, that moment our wealth, our prosperity, our being as a distinct land, is at an end. All this I have shown, taking a mere political view: but remembering that I spoke to knights and nobles, to men who can feel for national honour, and fear national disgrace, I have also pointed out the shame—the burning shame—that it would be in the eyes of all Christendom, the moment that your bold and gallant prince is dead, to truckle to his



often worsted enemy; to yield to Louis the lands which Charles the Bold so stoutly maintained against him; and to give his daughter's hand to the son of that base foe, whose dark and traitorous intrigues effected, more than aught on earth, your sovereign's overthrow and death. Already have I demanded why, instead of all those degrading concessions, you do not prepare defences in the field, and, rather than talking of yielding tamely to an unjust tyrant, you do not go forth to encounter him with lance and sword, as in the days of the great Duke. But now I must use another language—language more bold and more decided—and say that Flanders, Hainault, and Brabant, will never consent to be the slaves of France,—France, who has so often wronged us, and whose efforts, vain as they have been, have never ceased to grasp at the dominion of these lands. More! I say—and by my voice the three united states now speak to the councils of Burgundy—that we will consider and pursue, as a false and perfidious traitor, bought with the gold of France to betray his lady's interest,



that man, whoever he may be, who henceforth proposes the subjection of these lands to a French prince."

The Duke of Cleves eagerly supported the bold speech of the young citizen, as did also the Bishop of Liege—more perhaps from personal hatred to Imbercourt, than from any real disapprobation of the French alliance. Warm and violent words passed on all parts; and the discussion had reached a pitch of dangerous turbulence, when it was announced that the Count de Meulan, envoy extraordinary from the King of France, had just entered the city, and taken up his abode at the principal inn of the place.

This news gave a different turn to the deliberations of the council; and after determining that the reception of the ambassador should take place the following day, it broke up; and its various members separated, with those feelings of personal animosity burning in their bosoms, which have so often proved fatal to great designs.



## CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT seven o'clock at night, a post arrived in Ghent, bearing the unwelcome intelligence that Hesden, Montreuil, Boulogne, Cambray, and many other places, had yielded to the arms of France; that Philippe de Crèvecœur, the oldest and most tried servant of the house of Burgundy, had gone over to the enemy; and that Arras itself was lost to Flanders. Such were the tidings that reached Albert Maurice, while busily debating with Ganay, in a private chamber of the Hotel de Ville, the means of raising, as rapidly as possible, a large force for the defence of the country.

The messenger delivered the sealed packets into the hands of the young President, with notice that they were of the utmost importance; but, ere he opened them, Albert Maurice dismissed the bearer calmly, and finished the phrase which his entrance had interrupted.



He then broke the seals, and read; and as he proceeded, notwithstanding his great command over his own feelings, it was clear, from the contraction of his brow, and the quivering of his lip, that the tale therein written was any thing but pleasing.

Casting them on the table, after a moment's deep thought, the young citizen laid his hand sternly upon the papers, and, approaching the lamp towards them, pointed to the fatal tidings from Arras, saying to his keen companion, — “ This is sad ! this is terrible ! We must, if possible, keep this from the knowledge of the council, till this pitiful ambassador has had his reply.”

Ganay read the contents of the papers over, word by word; then raising his eyes to the face of his companion, and compressing his thin, bloodless lips, he replied, calmly but sternly—  
“ Imbercourt must die ! ”

Albert Maurice started.—“ No, no ! not so,” replied he; “ I am not one of those tigers, Ganay, to cross whose path is death. He may oppose me in the council; he may even



thwart me in my plans ; and yet not die, Ganay. But if he betray my country, his deed be upon his head. I will crush him with my heel, as I would a viper."

" Imbercourt must die ! " reiterated Ganay, in the same stern, determined tone he had used before.— " He *will* betray *your* country and *mine*, —and he dies. I have marked him well. I see his plans. He, like the traitors who have gone over before, will sell his country to France for French gold ; and he must die. The only difference between him and this Philippe de Crèveœur is, that the one, less cunning than the other, went over with nothing but his own brute courage to sell ; while this Imbercourt, take my word for it, will carry, as merchandise to Louis of France, the hand of Mary of Burgundy, and the coronet of all these states."

" Never ! " cried Albert Maurice, stung to the heart, as the other had intended, and striking his clenched hand upon the table ; " never ! My head or his shall whiten in the wind over the battlements of Ghent, before such a sacrifice be consummated."



The moment he had spoken, however, he felt that he had given Ganay an advantage ; and well understanding that the game between him and his subtle comrade was one that admitted of no oversight, and that he must be as much upon his guard with his apparent friend as with a declared enemy, he hastened to turn the conversation from a topic on which he could not speak wisely. " We must think farther "— he said ; " we must think farther ! In the mean time," he added abruptly, " see you, to this messenger, that he do not spread his news abroad before the reception of the worthy ambassador, which Louis has deigned to send. I have that in yon cabinet, which shall overthrow, at a word, all that his cunning can advance, were he as cunning as the fiend whose name he takes. At the same time, Ganay, I must trust to your zeal also, my friend, for the skilful management of our other purpose. This Duke of Gueldres you must render popular with the citizens, and oppose him strongly to the Duke of Cleves. Not too far, however, I would equally divide between them the power.



that the Duke of Cleves at present holds entire. Better it were, nevertheless, that the people over favoured him of Gueldres, than the other; for he has no hope. Every noble in the land would rise up against him; and, at the worst, it were but three passes of this steel"—and he touched the hilt of his sword—"to send him howling to the place he has so long deserved; and to win me the thanks of all the world, for ridding it of such a monster."

Notwithstanding all his care, Albert Maurice felt—and felt angrily—that the eager passions of his heart would burst forth and display more of his real feelings and emotions than he was willing to expose. Ganay smiled, too, as he listened; and with his smiles there was always mingled a degree of mockery of the person who excited them, which rendered their meaning very doubtful.

"May I trust you?" demanded Albert Maurice, sternly.

"You may," answered the druggist. "Doubt me not; for with you, Albert Maurice, I am more frank a thousand-fold than with any other human being. We are like two men playing



one game of chess, against a whole host of adversaries; and it is necessary that we should see each other's moves. Your game I know, Albert; and mine, I do not seek to conceal from you; for it would be both useless and fatiguing. I will, then, do your bidding in regard to these two men of Cleves and Gueldres; and so play them off against each other, that they shall both combine, in their dissensions, to raise you to the height of your ambition."

He spoke boldly; and Albert Maurice felt that, for once at least, he spoke truly; though, perhaps, he saw, that notwithstanding they were in some sort partners in the game, as Ganay had depicted them, yet they were playing for different stakes, and might soon find that they had different interests.

"And when this game is won, Ganay," said he calmly, after a brief pause—"this game in which you and I stand as partners,—say, are we to turn round the board, and singly play one short game more, against each other? — Ha! is it not so?"

"No; on my life!" replied Ganay, with a



degree of fervour unusual with him. — “No; on my life, young man. I have my passions, like my neighbours; but I am without ambition. Do *you*, too, believe me without a touch of feeling? You have shown me kindness in times past: you once saved the life of one that is now no more; three years ago you held my head when it throbbed with fever, when we were together on the shores of the Adriatic: and if you cross not my purpose—if you oppose not the stronger passion, which guides, and struggles with, and masters all—you shall find that my gratitude is only second to my revenge. “Even more!” he added, resuming his ordinary air of calm shrewdness: “I can be even grateful for those things which I accomplish by your means—though without your will; and our common efforts for one great purpose bind us together more firmly than you think. So, now, farewell!—but remember, I tell you Imbercourt is a traitor—and he must die!”

“If he be a traitor, die most certainly he shall,” replied Albert Maurice; “but in regard to that man, I mistrust my own motives too



much to rely on my own judgment. More, Ganay!—still more!—I mistrust your motives too; and I will not rely on your judgment either. Nay, protest not! I see your bitter persevering hatred of that man as clearly as if your bosom were of glass, though I see not the occasion of it. But it matters not what be the occasion.—I doubt myself, and I doubt you; and others, more impartial than either you or I, shall judge him, though, God knows, I know no cause of enmity you can have towards him.—So now, farewell.”

Ganay’s lip curled with a very mingled expression, as Albert Maurice pronounced the last words, but he made no reply; and, leaving the young citizen, he proceeded to confer with the messenger who had lately arrived, and then held a long and secret conference with Maillotin du Bac.

The post that brought such unwelcome tidings from the frontier, supped well at the *Maison de Ville*, and resting his weary limbs upon his bed, soon found the sweet sleep of fatigue; nor did he ever stir from the precincts



of the building. No one saw him without its gates ; no one held conference with him within, except in the presence of Ganay himself. Nevertheless, before an hour had passed, the whole news he had brought were known to Imbercourt, and were by him carried straight to the Princess. How it reached him it were hard to say, for no post came to the Cours du Prince from that quarter, but still he had learned it all. Not a word had escaped him, — the whole evil tidings were known, and the consternation was excited which Albert Maurice had been so desirous of warding off, till the ambassador from France had been received and dismissed. The views of the young citizen in this desire were certainly partly patriotic and partly personal ; but his immediate object was to send back the messenger of the deceitful Louis with such a reply, as would render the project of an union between France and Burgundy hopeless. Every fresh success of the French king of course strengthened the arguments of those who advocated the marriage of Mary with the Dauphin, and this torrent of evil tidings was well calculated to overpower all opposition.



Such had been the light in which Albert Maurice had seen the progress of Louis; but in vain, however, did he take measures to conceal it: each event, rather magnified than otherwise, reached the ears of Imbercourt, and by him were that very night detailed to Mary herself. The news had reached Ghent not long before, that almost the whole of the Duchy of Burgundy also, had been overrun by French troops; and this, together with the unresisted advance of the French king on the side of Flanders, the total loss of Picardy, Artois, and the Boulonnois, the desertion of her friends, the turbulence of her subjects, and the power of her enemies, overcame at length the unhappy girl's hopes and her firmness. After a long conference with Imbercourt and her chancellor, as well as with her cousin, the Lord of Ravestein, and her best of friends, Margaret, her father's widow, in an evil hour Mary consented to send the two former on a mission to the base monarch who was usurping her inheritance.

Under their dictation, with a trembling hand,



she wrote part of a letter to Louis XI.; but where she came to give them power to treat of her alliance with France, her feelings overpowered her, and the tears gushing from her eyes, obscured her sight.

“ Give me the pen, my sweet child,” said Margaret of York. “ My Lord of Ravestein and myself, your two nearest relatives and friends, will each write a part under your direction : so shall the document acquire additional weight, as showing the wishes of so many persons.”

This was accordingly done, and Mary calmly heard a paper read, which she felt was binding her to misery for life. With a hurried hand she signed her name, but she could bear no more, and hastened from the chamber.

“ Poor child ! ” said Margaret of York. “ Poor child ! — But now, my Lord of Imbercourt, lose not a moment. No communication with this coming ambassador will answer our purpose. You must see Louis himself; and treat with himself, and put forth all your wisdom to meet all his cunning. Hasten to



Peronne; fear not to bloody your spurs on the road, for not a minute that flies, till you are before the King of France, may not serve to recall this most necessary paper."

While this determination was adopted by the counsellors, Mary was followed from the room by Alice of Imbercourt, and the moment she had reached her chamber, that Princess cast herself upon the bosom of her fair attendant, and wept most bitterly. "Fear not, madam," whispered Alice, "fear not! You shall yet wed him you love."

Mary had never acknowledged her lingering hopes even to Alice of Imbercourt, perhaps hardly to her own heart. But now the more vehement passion overcame the milder feeling, and timidity was forgotten in grief. "Never, Alice! never!" sobbed Mary; "I have just signed away my last and only chance!"

"Fear not!" again repeated the young lady. "Do you remember, Madam, when you would not read the scheme of your future fate in the castle of Hannut?"

"Well, very well!" replied Mary, raising



her head and drying her eyes; "what then, my Alice?"

"Do you remember, then, that I staid behind," continued her companion, "when you quitted my uncle's observatory? Well; I remained long enough to give you consolation even now; for I saw there written, that the coronet of an archduchess was to bind the brow of my fair mistress."

Mary drew a deep and doubtful sigh; but there was a bright blush rose also in her cheek, which might seem an augury of hope, and it were false to say that she did not derive some comfort even from the predictions of a science, which — since the excitement of her visit to the castle of Hannut had worn away — she could hardly be said to believe.

At that period, however, each day of the life of Mary of Burgundy was a day of renewed care and anxiety; and the proceedings of the next morning opened with the tedious and painful ceremony of receiving the ambassador from the French monarch.

At the hour appointed it was announced that



the Count de Meulan waited, and Mary took her seat in state, with the Bishop of Liege on one hand and the Duke of Cleves on the other, while Albert Maurice and various members of the council stood round. It had struck the young citizen, however, as soon as he entered the hall of audience, that neither Imbercourt nor Hugonet, the two chief supporters of what was called the French party, were present. And it appeared to him not a little extraordinary that they should be absent, if in the town, when such an opportunity for showing their respect to the King of France occurred, as the public reception of his envoy. During the time that elapsed between his own arrival and the announcement of the ambassador, he asked frequently, but in vain, for the absent counsellors, and on every movement near the door looked for their appearance, supposing that the business of the day could not or would not proceed without their presence. He was not a little surprised, however, when the order for admitting the Count de Meulan was at length given without their appearance.



The doors were soon thrown open; and, dressed in the excess of splendour, but with a certain crouching and stealthy pace, habitual to the barber of the most cunning king in Europe, Olivier le Dain entered the hall, and approached the chair of the Princess. After the ceremony of his introduction, which he went through, not without grace, but without dignity, the ambassador was commanded to deliver his letters, which he accordingly did. These were found to be in full and correct form, and he was then directed to state the purport of his embassy, and what he was charged to communicate to the Princess of Burgundy, from her cousin the King of France.

Here, however, the envoy hesitated; and, after a moment's thought, replied in a low soft voice, that he was directed by his master, Louis the most Christian king, to explain his views and wishes to his beloved cousin and god-daughter, the Princess Mary, in private, and to her alone. He therefore, he said, craved a private audience, in which his communication should be more full and complete.



The Bishop of Liege, — whose territories lay too near the French frontier, and whose interests were too nearly connected with those of France to suffer him to feel any great personal interest in the distinct rights of the House of Burgundy, — had hitherto been the person who spoke on the part of the Princess. He of course had evinced every sort of respect for the ambassador of the French King; but at this point the Duke of Cleves broke in; and with a haughty and contemptuous tone, informed the Count de Meulan, that what he demanded was not consistent with the customs of the court of Burgundy. He must, therefore, he said, declare openly his errand to the Princess surrounded by her council, for no other proceeding could be permitted.

Again the ambassador hesitated: uttering several sentences, from which — though loaded with fine and sounding words, and gilded with a show of argument — all that could be gathered was, that the open communication required by the council was contrary to his monarch's commands. He then seemed about to retire;



but at that moment Albert Maurice advanced a little before the rest, and craved leave to explain the object and views of the ambassador, which that functionary seemed to have so much difficulty in doing for himself. The assembled court, and the ambassador himself, gazed on him with some surprise; but the young citizen proceeded.

“In the first place,” he said, “your grace will be glad to hear, who is the noble envoy whom that mighty monarch, Louis, King of France, thinks fit to send to the court of Burgundy — to the daughter of that great Prince who overthrew him in the field by valour and skill, and who foiled him in the cabinet by decision and boldness. Allow me, in the man who calls himself Count de Meulan, to introduce to your notice Olivier le Dain, or by some called Le Méchant, barber to the most Christian King, born at Thielt, and serving as a barber’s boy at Saarlvelt, near this city.” — A roar of laughter burst from the nobles of Burgundy; and Albert Maurice proceeded, waving his hand to the doorkeepers to prevent the



barber from making his exit too rapidly. —  
“ Do not let the worthy ambassador depart till he has heard me explain the object of his coming. I hold here in my hand, by the favour of some unknown friend who sent these papers to me, a copy of the private instructions of the King of France to the *Barber Ambassador*, which direct him, strictly, to keep the Princess and the court of Burgundy engaged in long and tedious negotiations, while he strives in private to persuade the people of Ghent to invite the King of France to enter their territory. He is further ordered to spare no means, neither money nor promises, to make the good men of this city declare for the King of France, and throw off the authority of their lawful sovereign. To this, by your grace's permission, I, as the only individual of the Burgher class in this presence, will take upon me to reply, that Louis, King of France, mistakes entirely the character and disposition of the men of Ghent; for, though they may be anxious to preserve their own liberties and privileges, they are no less anxious to preserve



the legitimate authority of their sovereign; and, though they are never disposed to submit to tyranny from their own princes, they are no less determined to resist all foreign domination. Let him learn that he can neither buy us with his gold, nor fool us with his promises; and that his intrigues and offers will be equally in vain with the men of Ghent. It is for you, my Lords," he continued, turning to the members of the council present, "as older men, and more experienced in the ways of courts than myself,—it is for you to judge what course ought to be pursued towards a man who comes as ambassador to a sovereign Prince; and, at the same time, undertakes to seduce the subjects of that Prince from their allegiance—who approaches the presence of an oppressed Princess, from the man who is robbing her of her territories and massacring her subjects, affecting in words and in style to negotiate with her as the messenger of a friend and a relation, while his real errand is to excite treason amongst her people, and to bribe her citizens to revolt. — It is for you, my Lords, I say, to



judge what is to be done with the caitiff who undertakes such a commission for such a man !”

“ Nail his ears to the door-post,” cried the Lord of Vere, an impetuous noble of North Zealand.

“ Throw him into the river !” cried the Duke of Cleves; “ such treatment does he well deserve.”

Various such pleasant modes of disposing of the person of the barber ambassador were suggested by different members of the council, probably without any intention of carrying them into effect. They were not, however, without producing some impression, and that of no very agreeable nature, upon the mind of Olivier le Dain himself. That worthy personage had listened to the speech of Albert Maurice in downcast silence. No flush betrayed his agitation or shame, though his lip quivered a little, and at one time he took two or three steps towards the door. But when he heard the many unceremonious methods of treatment proposed, he gradually crept back till he was within a step of the entrance of the chamber.



His face was still turned towards the council ; and he still seemed listening attentively to the somewhat bitter strictures which were passing upon his own conduct ; but he showed no inclination to retreat farther than was absolutely necessary to keep himself out of the reach of violent hands, so that the doorkeepers were off their guard. As the Duke of Cleves spoke, the barber paused and listened, gave a furtive glance over his shoulder ; and then, without any effort towards taking leave, he darted out of the presence at once, reached the court-yard, mounted his horse, and galloped away to the inn where he had lodged.

Before he arrived at that building, however, he had begun to feel that his apprehensions of any personal violence had probably been a little too hasty ; and a loud laugh, that he remembered to have heard, as he quitted the audience-hall, confirmed him in that opinion. The calm reflection of a few hours, during which he seemed totally forgotten by the whole town, refreshed his courage and reanimated his hopes ; and, therefore, not to abandon his pur-



pose without another effort, he ventured to ride out in the evening; but the moment that he presented himself in the streets, he was greeted with so much mockery and laughter, that he soon found the attempt would be vain. A full account of his birth and situation had been industriously circulated amongst the people during the day; and as nothing excites the hatred and contempt of the populace more than to see a person sprung from amongst themselves, affecting the airs and splendour of a class above them, they were all prepared to shower upon his head every sort of ridicule and abuse. No sooner did he appear in the streets, than this determination to insult and annoy him in every different way, began to manifest itself among the people. One held a pewter bason before his horse's head; another lifted up his rugged chin, and begged that his highness would shave him, just to keep his hand in; and a third exclaimed, that he must not think to lead the people of Ghent by the nose, though he might often have taken the King of France by that organ.



Just while he was turning away from these unpleasant salutations, in order to return as fast as possible to his hotel, some shouts met his ear, which seemed rapidly coming nearer, and in a moment after he perceived half a dozen horsemen cantering easily down the street, with a number of men and boys running by the sides of the horses, shouting loudly, "Long live the Duke of Gueldres! long live the noble Duke of Gueldres!" The horseman at their head was a powerful handsome man, of about fifty, with a coarse but bold expression of countenance, but still possessing that easy air of dignity and command, which is a part of the education of princes. Some one, as the cavalcade approached, recognising the person of the French ambassador by his splendid dress and gaudy train, shouted out the name and various opposite occupations of Master Olivier le Dain; and the Duke of Gueldres, dashing on, drove his horse rudely against that of the unfortunate barber, which reared with the stroke, and almost plunged him into the canal, near which they were riding.

"Ha, ha! Master Barber," shouted the



Duke, in the coarse and brutal tone which he usually employed, when he had no purpose to answer which might require softer speech ; “thou canst never shave without water, man, but there is plenty in the canal.”

The populace roared their applause, and, while Olivier le Dain, keeping his seat with difficulty, made the best of his way back to his inn, and thence for ever out of the gates of Ghent, the Duke of Gueldres rode on, nor stopped till he sprang from his horse at the house of Albert Maurice.

Representatives from all the different cities of that part of Belgium which was then under the dominion of Burgundy, had arrived in Ghent the day before ; and at the moment that the Duke of Gueldres approached, the young President was in the act of despatching a deputation to Louis XI., then encamped at Arras. Albert Maurice, be it remarked, went not himself ; but at the head of the deputation, on the part of Ghent, was the druggist Ganay.

The Duke of Gueldres found the street before the young citizen's house crowded with



horses and horse boys; and the different chambers of the house itself filled with the attendants of the deputies and the officers of the city — messengers, visitors, soldiers, and spectators — displayed a spectacle more like the palace of a sovereign prince than the house of a simple merchant in a Flemish town.

“By my faith,” the Duke muttered, as he walked on amidst robes, and embroidery, and gold chains, and furred gowns, “times have strangely changed with the good city of Ghent, since that cursed tyrant shut me up in his old stone rat-trap. Which is Master Albert Maurice?” he then demanded of a merchant who was passing out; “which is the grand bailli — which is the President of the Municipal Council?”

“Yonder he stands at the head of the table,” replied the merchant, “speaking with the deputies of Utrecht and Bruges.”

At that moment the eye of the young citizen fell upon the Duke of Gueldres; and — though he was unannounced, and Albert Maurice had never beheld him before — either from having heard his personal appearance described, or



from having seen some picture of him, the burgher at once recognised the prince, and advanced a step or two to meet him.

The Duke of Gueldres was surprised to behold so young a man chosen from amongst the jealous and factious citizens of Ghent to wield the chief authority of the city, to fill two of the most important offices, and to influence so strongly the councils of all Flanders; but he was still more surprised to find that high and dignified tone in the merchant, which so well became his station. He had been prepared to see the President in possession of vast power, but he now perceived that his power was greatly derived from his superiority to his class, and he at once saw the necessity of suiting his demeanour — for the time at least — to the man. With a degree of suavity which no one knew better how to assume, when it answered his purpose, than Adolphus Duke of Gueldres, that base and brutal prince, now, with his manner softened down to an appearance of mere generous frankness, thanked the young citizen for his libera-



tion, and told him that he had good reason to know that the happy event was solely owing to his intervention.

Albert Maurice at once gracefully complimented the Duke on his enlargement, and disclaimed all title to gratitude for an act which, he said, emanated from the Princess herself. He had, he acknowledged, strongly advised her to the course she had pursued, when she had condescended to consult him upon the subject ; but he assured the Duke that she had done so first, before he had ventured to propose such a proceeding.

“ Well, well,” replied the Duke, “ I knew not that my fair cousin was so generous, but I will kiss her pretty cheek in token of my thanks, which, perhaps, she will think no unpleasant way of showing one’s gratitude.”

The blood rushed up to the temples of the young citizen, but he made no reply, and merely bowed low. He then begged the Duke to excuse him for a few moments, while he concluded the business in which he had been engaged. The Prince replied, that he would detain him



no longer ; and Albert Maurice, with cold and formal courtesy, suffered him to depart — from that moment either a secret or an avowed enemy. As soon as he was gone, the young citizen took leave of the deputies, besought them to make all speed to meet the King, and directed them to beg him — without hastening on to plunge the two nations in long and inveterate war — to halt his armies, till such time as the States General could devise and propose to his Majesty some fair means of general pacification.

He then gave into the hands of Ganay a letter, fully authorising the deputation to treat, in the name of the Princess, — which instrument had been unwillingly wrung from Mary during the morning, notwithstanding the secret powers which she had so lately given to Imbercourt and Hugonet. To this Albert Maurice added a private injunction, to trace and discover all the movements of the two ministers, whose absence from the council of that day, he had remarked : and there was a sort of fierce and flashing eagerness in the eye of the young



citizen, as he spoke this in a low whisper, which the druggist marked with pleasure and expectation.\*

The result of this deputation to the crafty monarch of France is so well known, that it needs but short recapitulation. Louis received the members of the Belgian states with all civility, and treated them individually with distinction; as that wily monarch well knew, that through the intervention of such men alone he could hope to win that extensive territory, which he was striving to add to France. At the same time, he positively refused to treat with them in their official capacity, and affected, at first, a degree of mystery in regard to his reasons, assigning a thousand vague and unreasonable motives for so doing, which he well knew would not be believed for a moment; but

\* The proceedings of the municipal council of Ghent, even before the assembling of the States, which it entirely commanded, were, in many instances, much more bold and tyrannical than any that it has seemed necessary to particularise here. Some authors assert that it forbade Mary to transact any public business without its sanction.



which he was aware would induce the deputies—encouraged by his homely and good-humoured manner—to press so strongly for a further explanation, as to afford him some excuse for the base treachery he meditated against their sovereign.

The deputies fell into the trap he laid ; made use of every argument to induce him to negotiate with them upon the powers they had received from their several cities ; and finally urged, that if he would not acknowledge them as the representatives of the towns of Flanders, Hainault, and Brabant, he must at least consent to receive them as ambassadors from the young Duchess of Burgundy, whose letters of authority they then tendered.

Still, however, Louis refused ; and, at length, as if worn out by importunity, he said, “ My good friends of Ghent and the other towns of Flanders, you must very well know, from my whole conduct towards you, that I would rather treat with you than with any other persons. I am a plain man, and love to deal with plain citizens, but you are entirely mistaken in sup-



## CHAPTER XII.

It is wonderful, though common to a proverb, that days of sunshiny brightness and placid tranquillity should so often precede great convulsions in the natural and the political world; and that although "coming events do throw their shadows before them," yet that the storm, when it does come, should almost always find the world all smiling, and the birds in song.

The day after the return of the deputation from Arras, the aspect of the city of Ghent was more like that which it had been during the most brilliant days of Philippe the Good and Charles the Bold than it had appeared for many months. The shops and booths, which projected into the street, and which, being totally unprovided with any means of defence against popular violence, were generally closed in times of tumult and disturbance, were now again all open, and full of their finest wares.

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Mountebanks of different grades, and those who sold books, and repeated verses, were exercising their usual vocations at the corners of the streets. Burghers and their wives, lords and ladies, artisans and peasantry, all in their gayest dresses, — for it was one of the high festivals of the year, — moved about in the streets; and, to crown all, the foul weather had disappeared, and the sun shone out with a warm and promising beam.

A great multitude had collected near the palace gates, to see the different members of the council, and the deputies from the various cities and states of Flanders and Brabant, proceed in state to visit the Princess Mary; and the approbation of the crowd — often depending not a little upon the splendour of the several trains — was loudly expressed as their peculiar favourites approached the gates of the great court. At the same time it was remarkable, that though loud and vociferous in their applause, the multitude restrained all marks of disapprobation on the appearance of persons



supposed to be unpopular, with wonderful and unexpected moderation.

Since the first effervescence of feeling had subsided, after the defeat of Nancy and the death of Charles the Bold, and since the apprehension of immediate revolt had gone by, the ministers of Mary of Burgundy, — or, to speak more correctly, the members of the provincial council of Flanders, — though spending the greater part of the day in the palace, had generally returned to inhabit their own hotels at night. Thus, almost every one but the Lord of Ravestein, who remained in the palace with his cousin, had to traverse the crowd in their way to the audience hall. Imbercourt and Hugonet, neither of whom had ever been very popular, passed amidst profound silence, and Maillotin du Bac, who, in his official dress as Prévôt, was riding about the ground, took no small credit to himself for saving those two noblemen from some sort of insult. The Duke of Cleves again, was loudly cheered; but the Duke of Gueldres, who, by some means unknown even to himself, had acquired an extraordinary



degree of popularity during the short time which had elapsed since his return to the city, received a degree of applause that far outdid that which greeted the Duke of Cleves. Albert Maurice, however, as the great favourite of the people, and one whom they considered more peculiarly as their own representative, was received with loud, long-continued, and reiterated shouts. Indeed, as he rode on upon a splendid and fiery horse, dressed in magnificent apparel — not only as president of the council of Ghent and grand bailli of the city, but as holding, in the capacity of chief pensionary, the presidency of the States General of Flanders \*, and followed as such by a number of guards and attendants — with his lordly air and his beautiful person, he looked more like some mighty prince going to claim his bride, than a simple merchant about to appear before his sovereign.

The visit was one of ceremony, and as no

\* When the States of Flanders assembled in Ghent, which was generally the case, either the chief pensionary or the chief eschevin of that city presided in the assembly as a matter of right.



business of importance was to be transacted, the Princess received her court in state; and, to see the splendour with which she was surrounded, the guards, the attendants, the kneeling subjects, no one would have supposed that Mary of Burgundy was less a free agent than the meanest subject in her capital.

All who presented themselves before the Princess were received with affability and courtesy, with the one exception of the Duke of Gueldres, from whom, as he approached the chair of state, she seemed to shrink with a repulsive abhorrence, which she could in no degree command. Although he appeared there contrary to her commands, she strove to say something kind in regard to his liberation, and to smile as he offered his thanks; but the words died away before they were uttered, and the smile faded upon her lip as soon as it appeared. To Imbercourt and Hugonet, the Lord of Vere and others, who supported the French alliance—although they had so strongly pressed her to sacrifice all her own personal feelings, and to abandon the hope of happiness for life—she still, from a deep conviction of the honesty of



their intentions, and from long habits of regard, yielded the same marks of friendship and affection with which she had always distinguished the counsellors and friends of her father, however much their advice to him or to herself had been at times opposed to her own opinion, or to her dearest wishes. On Albert Maurice too, as the boldest and strongest supporter of her own wishes against the voice of her more politic advisers, and as the leader of those who really ruled in Flanders, she smiled sweetly, from a feeling of gratitude as well as esteem; and none who beheld the young citizen in the midst of that splendid court, could help acknowledging that he was well fitted, in appearance at least, to take his place among the noblest and most courtly of the land. His mien had all the calm dignity of power and the easy grace of confident but not presuming self-possession. There was also a freshness and variety in his words and actions, which, springing from a rich and generous mind, gave a sparkling grace to the whole of his demeanour, and rendered it at once striking and pleasing.



There was certainly a difference in his manners from that of the stiff and stately nobles of the court of Burgundy, but it was slight, and to his advantage, characterised by no want of grace or dignity, but rather by the calm ease of natural politeness, as opposed to the acquired formality of courtly etiquette. It seemed, not that he was assuming a rank, and mingling amidst a class to which he did not belong — but rather as if he had suddenly taken possession of a station which was his own by the indefeasible right of ennobling nature. The respect and deference also with which all the rest of the court felt themselves obliged to treat him, both from his authority over the people, and the powers of his own mind, placed him more at his ease; and perhaps the very excitement which he felt under the eyes of Mary of Burgundy, and the mighty aspirations and brilliant hopes which thrilled in his bosom, were not without their share in giving firmness and dignity to the step with which he trode the ducal halls of the house of Burgundy.

Thus passed by the morning; and every thing



proceeded in undisturbed harmony and tranquillity, both within the *Cours du Prince*, and without its walls. The populace showed themselves calm and placable; and it had seldom happened of late that so many nobles and statesmen, of different opinions and different interests, had met within the gates of that palace with so little jarring and contention. Nevertheless, there were things observed by many of the keen eyes which hang about courts, and watch the flickering signs of the times, that boded events not quite so pacific and gentle as the first aspect of affairs might augur. Between Albert Maurice and the Lord of Imbercourt no words passed; and as their glances encountered upon more than one occasion, the lordly brow of the young citizen became overcast, and a fire blazed up in his eye, which spoke no very cordial feeling towards that nobleman. Imbercourt himself, whose demeanour through life had always been characterised by calm gravity, which, without absolutely approaching to sadness, had been still farther removed from cheerfulness, had — since



the death of his master — shown himself more gloomy and reserved than he had ever before appeared ; and, on the present occasion, also, there was a deep immovable sternness in his countenance, which had something in it more profound than can be expressed by the word melancholy. He met the fiery glance of the young citizen, however, calm and unchanged. His eyelid never fell, his brow contracted not a line, his lip remained unmoved. Not a trace of emotion of any kind passed over his face, as he endured rather than returned the gaze of the young citizen ; and, after remaining a few minutes in the Princess's presence, he took his leave, mounted his horse, and rode homewards. But as he passed by Maillotin du Bac, and addressed some common observation to that officer, there was a sort of triumphant sneer on the hard countenance of the Prévôt, and an unnatural degree of courtesy in his manner, from which, those who saw it, inferred no very favourable anticipations in his mind regarding the Lord of Imbercourt.

When the whole ceremony was over, and



Mary of Burgundy was left alone with Alice of Imbercourt, and a few of her other attendants, her heart seemed lightened of a load, and a smile, which approached the expression of happiness, brightened her countenance for the first time since her father's death.

"Thank God, Alice," she said, "that it is over. I was very anxious about the passing by of this morning, for I feared much that some angry clashing might have taken place, concerning the messengers despatched to the cruel King of France.—But you are sad, Alice," she continued,—seeing the fair face of her gay friend overcast with unusual clouds, which probably had arisen from the increased gloom she had observed upon the countenance of her father:—"you are sad, Alice,—you, whose gay and happy spirit seems formed by heaven to bear up against every thing."

"I know not well how it is, your Grace," replied Alice, with a sigh; "nothing particular has happened to make me so; and yet, I own, my heart feels more gloomy than it generally does on such a sunshiny day."



"Nay, Alice," replied the Princess, "you must be sad, indeed, to call Mary of Burgundy, 'your Grace,' when from our earliest years we have grown up together as sisters more than friends. But be not gloomy, dear Alice; all will, I trust, go well. There is not that evil, in all this sorrowful world, which could shake my trust in an over-ruling Providence, or make me doubt that the end will yet be good."

"But sorrows must sometimes happen," replied Alice; "and in that book, — which I wish I had never looked into, — in the cabinet at Hannut, I saw that some time soon, you were to lose two faithful friends: — I wonder if I shall be one."

"Heaven forbid! dear Alice," replied the Princess. "However, I am sorry that you have told me;" and she fell into a deep and somewhat painful reverie, from which she only roused herself, to propose that they should go and visit the Dowager Duchess, Margaret, who inhabited the other wing of the building.

Alice willingly followed; and the Duchess — though, in her grief and widowhood, she had



taken no part in the ceremonies of the day—received her fair visitors with gladness, and enquired with some anxiety how the morning and its events had passed away. Margaret's mind was of that firm and equable, though gentle tone, which feels every misfortune intensely, but bears it with unshaken resolution; and it is a quality of such minds to communicate a part of their own tranquil and enduring power to others with whom they are brought in contact. Thus Mary of Burgundy always felt more calm and more resigned after conversing long with Margaret of York than before; and if, in the present instance, her design in visiting her step-mother was to derive some such support, she was not disappointed. Both herself and Alice of Imbercourt returned from the apartments of the Duchess less gloomy than when they went; and the vague omens which had given rise to their melancholy were dropped and forgotten, especially as nothing occurred during the rest of the morning to recall them to the mind of either the Princess or her fair attendant. The day went by in peace and tranquillity.



The multitudes dispersed and retired to their own homes. The brief sunshine of a winter's day soon lapsed into the dark, cold night; and a thick white fog, rolling densely up from the many rivers and canals that intersect the town of Ghent, rendered all the streets doubly obscure. Several of the hours of darkness also went by in tranquillity: though the glare of many torches, lighting various groups of persons, through the dim and vapoury atmosphere, and casting round them a red and misty halo of circumscribed light, together with the shouting voices of people who had lost their way, and the equally loud replies of those who strove to set them right, broke occasionally upon the still quiet of the streets of Ghent, during the course of the evening.

All this, too, passed away, and the hour approached for resigning the body and the mind to that mysterious state of unconscious apathy, which seems given to show that we can die, as far as sentient being goes, and yet live again, after a brief pause of mental extinction. Mary of Burgundy, whose days—if ever the days of



mortal being did so — should have passed in peace, was about to retire to rest, thanking Heaven that one more scene in life's long tragedy was over. Her fair hair was cast over her shoulders, in soft and silky waves, and she was thinking — with the natural comment of sorrow upon human life — “how sweet a thing is repose!” Although she had assumed in public the state of a sovereign Princess, in private she had hitherto dispensed with that burdensome etiquette, which renders the domestic hours of princes little less tedious than their public ceremonies. Her ladies were all dismissed to rest before she herself retired to her own apartment, and two tiring women of inferior rank were all that remained to aid her preparation for repose. Those women, whose whole intellects were composed of the thoughts of dress and ornament, contented themselves with performing their several offices about the person of the Princess, and leaving her mind to reflection. Thus, perhaps, the hour which she spent each night in her own chamber, ere she lay down to rest, was one of the sweetest portions



of time to Mary of Burgundy. It was the hour in which her heart, relieved from all the pressure of the day, could commune with itself at ease; and, could one have looked into her thoughts on that or any other night, the whole course of her life gives reason to believe, that they would have displayed as fine and pure a tissue of sweet and noble ideas, as ever the mind of woman wove. Her toilet for the night, however, had proceeded but a short way, on the present occasion, when the door of the chamber was thrown open with uncereemonious haste, and Alice of Imbercourt, pale, agitated, trembling, with her own brown hair streaming over her shoulders like that of the Princess; and showing how sudden had been the news that so affected her, rushed into the apartment, and, casting herself upon her knees before Mary, hid her eyes upon the lap of the Princess, and wept so bitterly as to deprive herself of utterance.

“What is the matter, my dear Alice? What is the matter, my sweet girl?” demanded Mary, anxiously. “Speak, speak, dear Alice! what has happened so to affect you?”



"Oh, Madam, Madam!" sobbed Alice, "my father—my dear father!"

"What of him?" exclaimed Mary, turning deadly pale. "What has happened to him, Alice; tell me, I beseech you?"

"Oh, Madam, they have arrested him and the Lord of Hugonet!" replied Alice, "and have dragged them from their beds, loaded with chains, to the town-prison!"

"Good God!" cried Mary, clasping her hands; "will they deprive me of all my friends? Has not the gold of Louis tempted all feeble hearts from my service, and will my own subjects take from me the only ones who have been found firm?"

"They will kill them,—depend upon it, they will kill them!" cried Alice. "There is only one person on the earth can save them; and, alas! I fear that these butchers of Ghent will be too quick in their murder for him to come."

"Who do you mean, dear girl?" cried Mary. "Who is there you think can aid them? What do you propose? Let us lose no time; but take any way to save their lives."



Some one," she added, turning to her tiring women, "go to my mother, the Duchess; tell her I would fain speak with her.—Now, Alice, what way do you propose?"

"Oh, let me go!" cried Alice, wildly, "let me go! Let me lose not a moment of time! I will easily find him out, or send on messengers, or bring him by some way! Let me go, I beg—I entreat!"

"But of whom do you speak?" again demanded Mary. "You forget, dear Alice, I know not what you mean."

"I mean!" replied Alice, while a slight blush passed rapidly over her countenance, and was immediately again succeeded by the eager and terrified paleness which had before appeared there,— "I mean—I mean the Vert Gallant of Hannut. 'Tis scarce three days ago, that, by a letter from Hannut, Hugh de Mortmar bade me seek aid and assistance from him, if any thing happened, in the tumult of this city, to cause me danger or distress. He said that the Vert Gallant owed him much. Let me go, Madam, I beseech you."

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"But you cannot go alone, dear Alice," replied the Princess, gazing upon her almost as much bewildered as she was herself; "you cannot go alone, and at this hour of the night. At all events, you must have a party of the guards."

"Oh, no, no," cried Alice; "they will only let one person pass through the gates at a time: and there are men here set to watch the river, so that no large boat can pass."

At this moment the Dowager Duchess of Burgundy entered the chamber of her step-daughter; and Mary was beginning to explain the circumstances, as far as she had been able to gather them from her terrified companion, when she found that Margaret was already acquainted with many more particulars concerning the arrest of Imbercourt and Hugonet than even herself. So daring an act on the part of the turbulent men of Ghent, as the arrest of two members of the supreme council of Flanders, of course terrified and shocked both Mary and her step-mother. But their personal apprehensions for the future, and consideration of the



long series of calamities and horrors which such a deed portended, were overpowered by the wild agony of the daughter of one of those victims of popular sedition. The tears poured over her cheeks, her fair hands clasped in convulsive agony, till the taper fingers seemed as if they would have broken ; and still she besought the Princess, with wild eagerness, to permit her instant departure in search of him on whose assistance she seemed to place her only hope of delivering her father.

Mary called upon her step-mother to second her reasonings with Alice, for the purpose of persuading her to take some protection and assistance, at least, with her in her attempt to escape from the town, and in the difficult search she proposed for one, whose character was so doubtful, and whose dwelling was so uncertain. But Margaret, animated by a bolder spirit, saw the proposal in a different light, and supported strongly the desire of Alice, to seek the assistance she hoped for, accompanied alone by the page.

“Great things,” she said, “have been done



by less men than this adventurer seems to be. Many a battle between York and Lancaster has been won by the aid of foresters and outlaws. If you can once secure his assistance, and he can, by any of those strange means which he has been often known to employ so successfully, introduce his bands within the town, these rebellious men of Ghent may yet be taught a lesson which they have much need to learn. Go then, my poor girl, if you have any, even probable means of discovering the abode of him you seek. Take the page with you; furnish yourself with all the money and jewels which you can collect. The Princess and I will do our best to contribute, for with such men, gold is better than eloquence; and, at all events, you will have the satisfaction of doing your duty towards your father."

"In the mean time, Alice," added Mary, "be not more anxious than you can help for your father's safety. These men will, doubtless, never attempt any thing against his life without bringing him to trial. All the preparations must take long, and I will leave no



means unused to delay their proceedings, and to mitigate their rancour. I will send for the President; I will speak with him myself. I will entreat, I will beseech, I will rather lay down my own life than that they should hurt my faithful servants."

"Thank you! thank you, dear Lady!" replied Alice, kissing her hand; "thank you, thank you for your comfort! But I must go," she added, with eager anxiety; "I must not lose a moment."

"Stay, stay!" said the young Duchess, seeing her about to depart. "Let Bertha call the page whom we employed before, and we will determine on some better plans than your own unassisted fancy can frame."

It would be unnecessary here to enter into the minute details of all that ensued; and, indeed, so rapidly were the arrangements concluded, that many words would only serve to give a false impression of things that were resolved and executed in a few brief moments. Suffice it, then, that the page was soon brought to the presence of the Princess; and, in eager



and hasty consultation, it was determined that he should proceed in search of a small skiff, which, being brought opposite to the palace wall, on the water side, would enable Alice to make her escape with less chance of observation than if she attempted to pass the gates either on horseback or on foot, at that hour of the night.

No large boat would be allowed to pass, and therefore he was directed to seek the smallest that he could possibly find ; but, at the same time, to use all his shrewdness in endeavouring to discover some boatman, who was either trustworthy by native honesty, or might be rendered secret by a bribe. The boy at once declared in reply, that he well knew a man who used to bring the Duke's venison up from the woods, and whose taciturnity was so great that those who knew him averred that he had never said ten words to any body yet, nor ever would say ten words more.

In search of this very desirable person the page instantly proceeded ; but, either from the darkness of the night, or from having found it difficult to wake the boatman out of his first



sleep, the boy was so long in returning, that all Alice's preparations for her journey were completed, and many minutes spent in agonising anxiety, ere he re-appeared. When he did come, however, he brought the glad tidings that all was ready, and, after taking leave of the Princess, with a rapid but silent step, Alice threaded the dark and intricate passages of the palace, passed the postern unquestioned, and finding her way with difficulty through the dim and foggy air, to the steps which led towards the water, she found herself at last by the side of the boat. Stepping forward over some unsteady planks, she was speedily seated in the stern, with the boy beside her: the single boatman, whom they had found waiting, pushed silently away from the bank, and, in a minute after, the skiff was making its slow way through the fog, down the dull current of the Scheldt.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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